

Preisner races way to GHAC cross-country title

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Leads Bishop Reding midget boys to successful OFSAA qualifying bid

By HERB GARBUTT
METROLAND WEST MEDIA GROUP

It may not be his primary sport, but you wouldn't know it by his results.

Continuing an impressive first season in which he's finished no lower than second at any meet, Bishop Reding's Ben Preisner won the Golden Horseshoe Athletic Conference (GHAC) cross-country championship last Tuesday at Dundas' Christie Conservation Area.

Preisner beat Georgetown's Bryan Bartle by three seconds to win the five-kilometre midget boys race, clocking in at 17.39 minutes. That also proved to be the difference as the Royals edged Georgetown by a single point to capture the team title — and book passage to OFSAA.

The top two teams and top three individual finishers qualify for the provincial championships.

Unlike most of the top finishers, Preisner doesn't train with a track club.

Instead, Reding coach Maureen Morrison says the Grade 9 student is "a raw talent."

"He's very light on his feet and he's got good cadence," Morrison explained, adding. "He's just a natural

born runner."

Preisner — a long-time AA hockey captain with the Milton Winterhawks, who also plays soccer with his hometown Magic — said his reason for adding cross country to his sporting endeavours was quite simple.

"I tried it in elementary school and I was good at it, so I thought I'd try it in high school."

The gifted runner said he likes to get out ahead of the pack, and in his three high school races he's had little problem staying there.

After a second-place finish at the season-opening meet, he won the McMaster Invitational three weeks ago. He kept his winning streak going at GHAC, and Morrison believes he's quite capable of having strong showing at this Saturday's OFSAA championships in Etobicoke — a course that features a steep hill that challenges the runners.

"He's strong. If he can get past that hill, the rest of Centennial is pretty flat," Morrison said, whose co-coach, Kevin Wong, took the midget boys out for a practice run in Etobicoke this past weekend.

Joining Preisner at the provincial showcase will be teammates Jeremy

Farquharson, Nick Hoffman and David Jones, who placed seventh, 17th and 19th respectively. Each position proved to be important, as just five points separated the top three teams.

Also heading to OFSAA is Shane MacDonald, another runner who stuck with the sport after having some success in elementary school.

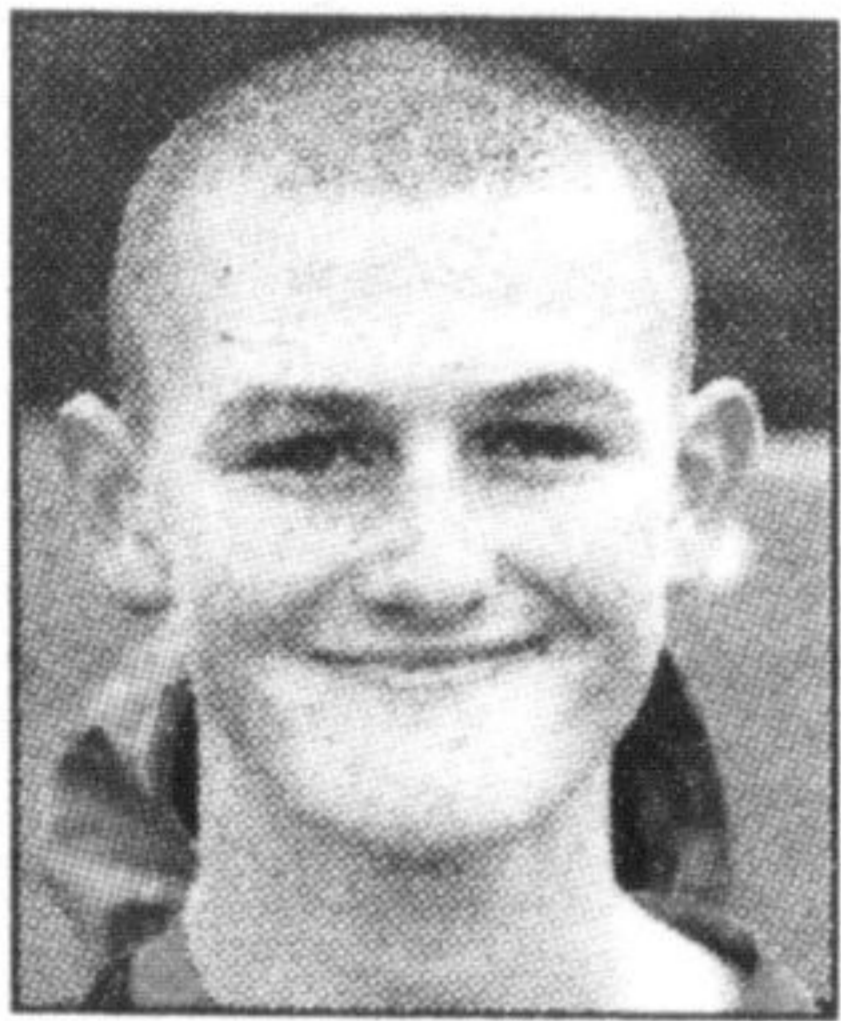
He finished third in the six-km junior boys race with a time of 21.45, 15 seconds back of winner Braden Culver of Oakville's St. Thomas Aquinas.

The E.C. Drury Grade 10 student knew he had a formidable opponent in Abbey Park's David Watson — last year's midget boys champion, who finished second this time around — but used that as motivation.

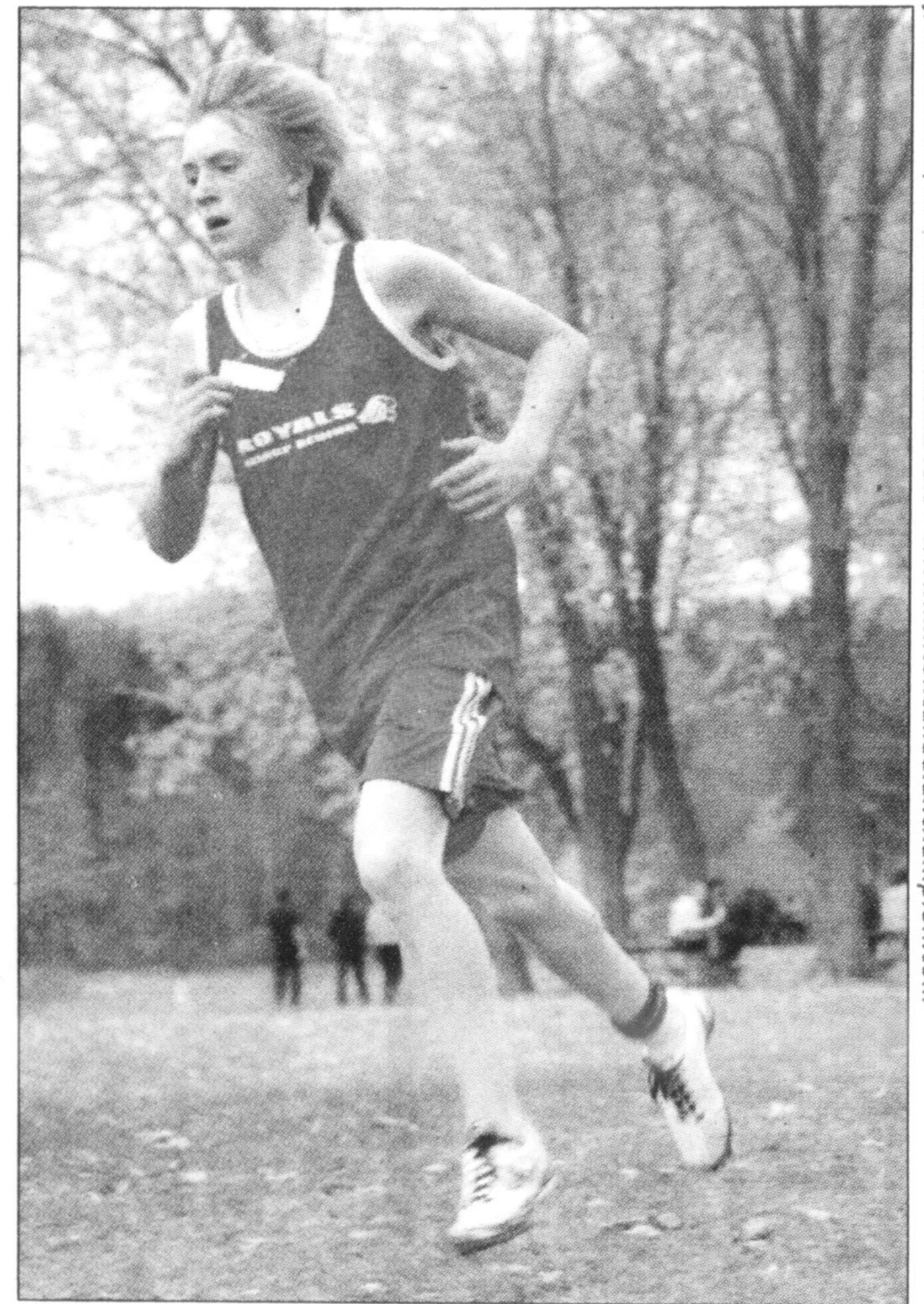
"My goal was to catch up to David," he said, after finishing 11 seconds behind the 2009 champ. "Last year he beat me by 50 seconds, this year it was 11, so I improved a lot. Hopefully, I can beat him at OFSAA."

That would put MacDonald in good standing, since Watson finished fifth at OFSAA last year.

Falling just a little short of advancement to OFSAA, Milton District's Serena Kim finished eighth in the four-km junior girls race, with a 17.33 performance.



Shane MacDonald



NIKKI WESLEY / METROLAND WEST MEDIA GROUP

ON THE MOVE: Ben Preisner delivers a winning performance at the GHAC cross-country championships.

AA bantams suffer first season loss

Milton's AA bantams will have payback on their minds tonight, looking to avenge their only loss of regular-season play so far.

That came in Oakville Saturday afternoon, when the Winterhawks struck first but eventually fell 3-1 to the now front-running Rangers.

The teams had gone into the game with identical 5-0-3 records, and Milton looked poised to come out with sole possession of top spot in Tri County's Bowen Division — holding a clear edge in the first period and going ahead on a power-play goal by Jacob Quinn early in the second.

But Oakville evened things up about seven minutes later and tallied twice in the final frame.

Nicholas Hoffman was sharp between the

pipes, while Brock Tracey moved back to defence and provided steady play, continuing to show his versatility.

Matthew Gooding had a couple of good scoring chances from the point, while assisting on the Winterhawks' lone goal was Kevin Galley.

The defeat followed a 1-1 stalemate with the Guelph Jr. Storm last Tuesday at Milton Sports Centre (MSC).

The Jr. Storm potted the equalizer with just 1:07 left to spoil the hosts' victory party. Austin Dezeeuw lit the lamp for Milton, who gave a fairly mediocre effort overall.

The Winterhawks host tonight's return engagement with Oakville at MSC, starting at 8 p.m.



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