

2006 Regional meet...

Ross runners enjoying special season

It takes a special kind of person to run cross country.

When Eagles quarterback Donovan McNabb threw up during a game last week, it was regarded as out of the ordinary.

Throwing up in cross country is a badge of honor. Shirts printed up for the Tiffin Carnival meet in September said if you didn't throw up after finishing the 3.1-mile (5-kilometer) race, you weren't trying hard enough.

At Ross, there's even a name for it: The bucket club.

Coach Cathy Esposito said none of her runners joined the club this year.

It's a testament to their conditioning. Running for three miles isn't difficult (I can do it. It might take a couple hours, but I can do it), but more than physical conditioning, it takes mental toughness, said Ross senior Michael Slayton.

Another testament to the Ross boys' conditioning: They're still running.

The boys, third at the Greater Buckeye Conference meet Oct. 14, shocked everyone with another third place finish a week later — at the district track meet in Oregon.

Esposito, always high on the kids she coaches,

Ross boys qualified for regional meet

Continued From B1

was positively ecstatic.

"To get out of districts is a kind of big accomplishment in our sport in our area," she said.

Michael Flores and Andre Velez qualified as individuals, finishing eighth and 13th, respectively. Flores finished with a time of 17:13, a second off his best time of the year.

"I put in a lot of miles this summer," Flores said.

But after finding out the times of Bowling Green and Toledo Central Catholic, Flores and Velez realized that the whole team was going.

"We worked really hard on peaking at the right time," Esposito said.

Although she was referring to the race, she could just as easily be talking about the fortunes of the team this year.

The seniors on the team — Josh Bowen, Andre Velez, Michael Flores and Slayton — qualified to the regional meet as freshmen. They failed to advance out of districts last year and the year before — but this year, had a little added motivation, Esposito said.

"That determination of knowing that you're a senior and this is it will do it," Esposito said.

But now, anything they do is gravy.

"There's not really that much pressure this week," said Bowen, who plans to go to

Eastern Michigan University next year. "We just wanted to make it out of districts."

For the third time this year, the cross country team will be running at Hedges-Boyer Park in Tiffin, the site of the Carnival meet and another meet in August.

"I'm ready for this meet," Velez said. "I like that course. I'm fast on that course."

But as much as Velez likes it, Slayton hates it.

"Me and Tiffin are enemies," he said in all seriousness. "There's something about that course that always slows me down."

It's a hilly course, and with rain in the forecast, will likely be muddy — one point in Slayton's favor.

"I love getting muddy," he said.

They'll also see a familiar opponent. Marion Harding went to districts at Galion last week, and advanced to Tiffin. Harding finished first in the conference meet. The other team that finished above the Ross boys was Findlay. Ross beat the Trojans last Saturday at districts. Not only did the team not advance, but they only qualified one individual.

"We went back and forth with Findlay and Marion all year," said Esposito, a smile creeping across her face. "The league's important, but it's not as important as going on in the tournament."

And a trip to Columbus isn't out of the question, either.

"Any given Saturday," Velez

said. "It's not out of reach."

Ross qualified just one girl to the regional race — but did so in grand style.

Ashley Fischer won the district race, the Little Giants' first district champion since 1995.

Fischer finished with a time of 19:19. At Tiffin, she'll see Bowling Green runners Christy Titus and Powers, as well as conference rival Alison Leckrone of Findlay.

Fischer's plan is to stay near the Bobcats runners, but about 20 seconds behind Leckrone.

"I have a chance to make it [to state]," Fischer said. "I just need to take it."

Next year, Esposito knows that she'll be rebuilding. However, as a cross country coach, she counts on that year in and year out. Some runners drop off the team, and some people try to pick up the sport — like Ricky Ramirez.

Ramirez, a sophomore, is in his first year on the cross country team. He played soccer last year. He ran 17:53 on a tough muddy course at the Stritch Invitational.

"Ricky's got a lot of talent," Esposito said.

But she knows that talent's only a part of what makes a good cross country runner.

"You've got to be a certain kind of person to be here."

Vince Guerrieri is the sports editor of the News-Messenger. He can be reached at vguerrie@fremont.gannett.com.

CROSS COUNTRY REGIONALS

Ross's Fischer wins meet

By **VINCE GUERRIERI**
Sports Editor

Fremont Ross's Ashley Fischer knew exactly what she had to do Saturday — keep up with Bowling Green's Christy Titus.

Fischer, a senior, went one better than that.

She beat Titus for the first time in her career to win the Division I regional cross country meet in Hedges-Boyer Park in Tiffin.

"I'm so excited about Ashley winning the regionals, I can't stand it," said her coach, Cathy Esposito. "She's been trying to get here her whole life."

Fischer, believed to be the first Ross regional cross country champion, will compete in the Divi-

sion I state cross country meet Saturday at Scioto Downs in Columbus.

In Division III, the Old Fort and Lakota girls teams qualified to the state meet as well.

It's a special triumph for the Stockaders, who finished third. Last year, they didn't have enough girls to field a team.

"I'm excited for them," said coach Tony Miller.

Becky Miller finished fifth and Alexa Stults was 11th, 12 seconds apart, to lead Old Fort.

The Lakota cross country team also advanced, finishing fourth. Carly Reese led the Raiders with a seventh place finish.

Woodmore's Lynne Schroeder finished eighth

and Gibsonburg's Ashley Fisher finished 10th to each qualify individually. Last year, the entire Gibsonburg girls team made the trip to Columbus.

Gibsonburg's Jordan Kirwen once again qualified to the state meet, finishing seventh at the regional meet. He was five seconds behind Deven Siesel of Margaretta.

Jackson Stults of Old Fort was the only Stockader boy to qualify to state. Last year, the entire team made the trip. Bryce Tiell of Lakota finished 15th, just making the cut for the state meet.

Vince Guerrieri can be reached at vguerrie@fremont.gannett.com.

High School Girls

Regional results

at Tiffin
Division I

- 1 Ashley FischerRoss 20:11.20
- 2 Christy Titus..Bowling Green 20:17.88
- 3 Allison Elber.....Brunswick 20:18.62

Cross Country

High School Boys

Regional results

**At Tiffin
Division I**

- 1 Tol. St. John's Jesuit
- 2 Lakewood
- 3 Brunswick
- 16 Fremont Ross

Ross results

50 Michael Flores.....	18:12.25
72 Andre Velez	18:35.83
75 Patrick Ramirez.....	18:39.73
93 Josh Bowen	19:01.89
117 Tony Rodriguez	19:44.03
125 Michael Slayton.....	20:42.97
126 Michael Yuhas	20:57.91