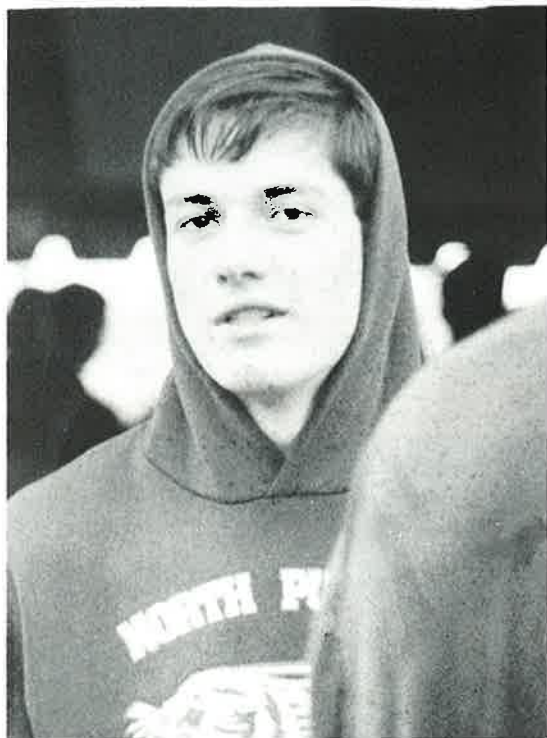


ch Butler Happy to Make State



Jeremy runs in the middle of the field just past turn 1.



Indiana University Track and Field Stadium was the site of the state finals.

On June 6 Jeremy Butler of little North Putnam hoped some world-class speed would fill his shoes.

Jeremy was only the second male runner from North Putnam to dare go this far in a track event. His seeded time of 2:00.48 got him there.

"First call for the 800-meter run."

Pre-race strategy focussed on adjusting to the pouring rain. The rain, according to Coach Jeff Mendenhall, caused the track to be slick, but it also cleaned out the pollen in the air which sometimes affected Jeremy's breathing.

"Second call for the 800-meter run."

Running in this meet was Jeremy's goal all season. He told this writer to photograph him at an earlier practice in the season because "this one's going to state." At a time when snow was still in the forecast, few people would've given that dream much hope. But here

Jeremy was walking down a ramp toward the infield.

"Last call for the 800-meter run."

Jeremy's position in his heat was near the outside. Two runners were in each lane. He was not favored to win, according to most experts. His mom, dad, and brother may have thought

differently as they sat within shouting distance of the starting line. Jeremy was ready.

"Bang!"

Jeremy slipped and almost fell. Perhaps it was a spike that didn't dig in. Nevertheless, the runners would travel two times around the track. A thousand images bombarded them. The smacking of shoes on the track, the haircuts of the lead runners, red and white umbrellas in the seats, screams, yells, runners groaning and panting for air, even an airplane hovering overhead. These perceptions only increased the level of concentration.

By the end of lap one, Jeremy had faded. "Disappointed," he would later say of his effort. Runners from both heats having the nine best times would stand atop a platform and receive awards from blue-shirted IHSAA officials.

Jeremy, after finishing the race, and running hard all the way, went over to his parents. His hopes had faded like the sun behind the clouds on that day. Still, Jeremy was able to regain perspective and say, "I'm just glad to be here."

Perhaps for a runner from little North Putnam, being here was magic.



Coach Mendenhall and Jeremy talk strategy.