

XC star has to overcome more than just opponents

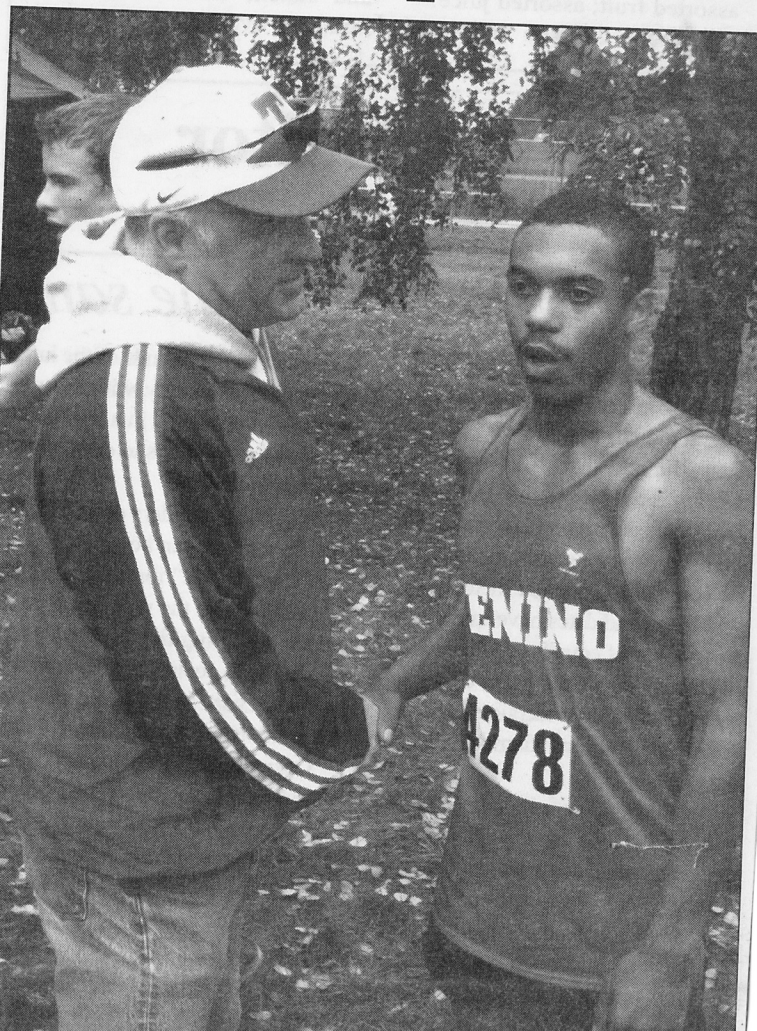
Tenino's Jarran Harris battling rare disease

By Dan Fisher
News Editor

Tenino junior Jarran Harris qualified for his third straight 1A State Meet when he placed sixth overall in the boys' race at the 1A District 4 meet held Nov. 1 at St. Martin's College in Lacey. But however the THS standout does at state, he's already a winner in the eyes of his coach and his parents.

"What many people don't know about Jarran is he has hemiplegia, a condition that only 60 people in the United States have," said Tenino Cross Country Coach Bryan Hoddle. "It's a condition where paralysis will come and go at will with Jarran's body. Doctors are unsure of the cause."

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"The full name of the disease is alternating hemiplegia of childhood," said Harold Kirkham, Jarran's stepfather. "Worldwide, there's only about 200 people known to have it. I've done some research online, and I found six papers on the subject that are about Jarran."

Jarran's mother, Chimene Kirkham, said she first took her son to doctors when he was five months old, but it was some time before they reached a diagnosis.

"There is no test for it," said Chimene. "You have to rule out everything else. They first identified this disease only about 35 years ago, so there's a lot they don't know about it."

When doctors at Children's Hospital in Seattle finally told Chimene that Jarran had hemiplegia, their prognosis wasn't good.

"When he was first diagnosed



Courtesy photo

Tenino junior Jarran Harris (right) is congratulated by THS Coach Bryan Hoddle (left) after placing sixth at the 1A District 4 cross country meet held Nov. 1 at St. Martin's University.

at eight months, we were told if he lived to age 10, he would probably never be able to walk," said Chimene, who added she periodically takes Jarran to the hospital in Seattle for checkups, tests and treatment.

"They're thinking the disease is genetic now," said Chimene. "When Jarran was 10, they conducted some tests on other victims and found links to family members. They do a lot of tests on Jarran, and if whatever they find out helps him, we'll be glad. But we also know it will help someone else."

Fate stepped in on Jarran's side when he began his high school cross country career, when Hoddle was hired as coach. Hoddle had served as coach of the U.S.A. track team for the 2004 Paralympic Games, so he has plenty of experience motivating athletes who face physical challenges. And he had a chance to use that experience at the beginning of this school year.

"Jarran hadn't had an episode

since he was eight years old, but he had one this year, when school started," said Chimene.

"Part of my face was paralyzed," said Jarran. "It was difficult, because my face looked strange. But I'm not able to tell when I'm running. It allows me to put my mind on something else."

"He started running cross country in middle school, and he was good, but he was kind of shy and didn't have much confidence," said Chimene. "When he got to high school, Coach Hoddle really helped him. He is such a positive person, and he gave Jarran faith in himself. He's helped Jarran to mature a lot."

Running not only helps Jarran deal with his condition – Chimene said it has helped her as well.

"The first time I watched Jarran run a race and he was way up there, I bawled," said Chimene. "He's just an awesome kid."

Complete Tenino results from the 1A District meet can be found on page 16.