

# Runner finds a place on college team

By **WILL MORT**

*Sentinel correspondent*

Heading off to college can lead to many opportunities for teenagers, some of which may be unexpected. For 18-year-old Michael Lock, of Spruce Hill, Juniata County, going to college led him to a spot on the Penn State Altoona cross country team.

What made this unique was the fact that prior to September 2011, Michael had never participated in a cross country running competition in his life.

As a soccer player and distance runner on the track team at Juniata High School, Michael had been exposed to running for years. However, he had never routinely faced distances even close to the eight kilometers that most college cross country events require participants to run.

Michael's ability to tackle the long distances cross country requires can be credited to keeping himself in great physical shape and playing sports throughout his childhood, as well as in high school. Playing soccer for 13 years played a big role in helping Michael maintain his endurance.

"Playing soccer since I was 5 helped me get used to strenuous running," he says. "I played wing basically my whole life and to play wing you have to be in good shape if you want to be good at it."

Michael was first introduced to competitive running in ninth grade when he decided to join the track and field team at Juniata. He did not compete in any long distance events freshman year, but was placed in both the mile and two-mile events his sophomore season. While he also competed in the 800 meter run and the 4x800 relay, Michael enjoyed the two long distance events the most. His enjoyment of these races motivated him to start training for them year-round.

"I would try to stay in shape from when soccer ended in the fall until the spring. I would work out in the winter so that I was prepared for track season," he says.

The extra work paid off during Michael's junior season when he posted a 4:59 mile at a meet, shattering his old per-

sonal record. This success made Michael realize he might have a future in distance running. However, instead of being consumed by aspirations of running in college, Michael decided to focus all of his energy on having a successful senior season.

"I trained really hard so that I could have an explosive senior year and try to advance far into districts," Michael says. "That winter I went out and ran by myself a lot to get ready."

Michael ended his high school track career with a mile time of 4:51, his personal best, in the District 6 tournament. With high school track in the rearview mirror, Michael explored his options of running competitively in college.

"I wanted to put my education first, so I decided which college I wanted to go to before I even thought about athletics," he says.

The college decision ended up being quite easy. As a lifelong Penn State supporter, Lock had always wanted to attend the university. He also aspires to be an engineer and found Penn State's engineering program appealing. He was accepted and would start in August 2011 at the Altoona campus. Lock's father, Tom, and sister, Crystal, are both Penn State graduates, so he was entering familiar territory.

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*Sentinel photo by WILL MORT*

Michael Lock, of Spruce Hill, revisits Dietrick Field at Juniata High School, while at home on semester break from Penn State Altoona, where he competed in cross country.



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