

Chapter 1

The Pact

"We can't all be heroes because someone has to sit on the curb and clap as they go by."

- Will Rogers

Paul got out of the car onto the northern edge of the Salem High School parking lot, thanked his father for the ride, and walked over to the island of grass where his teammates were already gathered. He could have jogged, but this was his first day of high school cross country practice, and he wanted to save his strength. Soon he would have to run two miles. Or even three.

Paul had run his first race at the age of four: a quick 200-meter sprint at the local track. Since then his passion for running had grown. He was a full year younger than most of his classmates, and never received a legitimate chance in other sports to show his talent or develop experience and confidence. In the summer before his sixth grade year, Paul began training to run. He was conservative at first, three or four runs a week, and a road race here or there. By junior high, Paul had extended his training into a more rigorous, demanding schedule with five to seven runs a week including interval and tempo runs. He was entering high school with high expectations for himself and for his team.

Most of the boys and girls around him were unfamiliar upperclassmen: Alex Hoopes, Alex Barnett, Isaac Ieropoli, Andrew Bender, Jason Naylor, and Jim Dombroski. But as he

looked around Paul recognized a few faces he knew from junior high. Jason Stewart, Tyler Bender, and Andy Thompson were all in Paul's grade, though only Andy had run cross country in junior high. Matt Yanek, another former middle school runner, noticed Paul from under one of the trees that grew on the team's patch of grass.

"Hey Paul. How's it going?" Yanek stood up to greet him. Paul appraised the boy, one grade older but no longer taller than he. Now that they both stood a little under six feet, Paul noticed how much stockier Yanek was than most runners—he looked more like a wrestler or a football player. Two years ago, when they had both run for the junior high team, he had beaten Paul every race. It was nothing personal, but Paul hated Yanek. Paul accepted nothing less than winning from himself. So he could not endure losing to anyone, even to the more physically mature Yanek.

"What's up, Matt." Outside of running, Paul (like most people) got along well with the boy. He was well liked due to his warm personality, and his fellow runners respected him. In conversations with him and about him, his teammates dropped his first name and called him just "Yanek." He negotiated most of life with a smile and a laugh. His laugh, though disarming, was perfunctory, an obligation to be performed before he could continue the conversation. Talking to him, one got the impression that he brought great, infectious enthusiasm to any topic, and he seemed to expect fantastic things to come from the exchange. Nor did he ever seem disappointed when the exchange was meaningless or unpleasant. If the subject under discussion made the other parties sad or discouraged, he refocused his energies to fixing their troubles. He could not stand silence and always had a slew of topics at the ready just in case the conversation flagged. If his earnestness made the listeners marvel, he grinned along with them. Today, however, Matt was in a serious mood.

"Nothin'." Yanek's clear blue eyes returned Paul's gaze. Each was still wary of the other. In junior high, Yanek had always

won. But when Yanek moved on to high school and Paul continued racing for the junior high team, he had beaten the older boy's best times. Yanek had not expected that. But Yanek did not have Paul's hatred of losing; he tended to live more in the moment. And right now, he had more pressing concerns than his rivalry with Paul. "Do you know anything about this new coach?"

"Not much," Paul replied. "My dad said he was from Marlinton. His name's Almond." Paul's father was on the school board, which had hired Almond only a few days earlier. Salem had a strong history of cross country success. The boys' cross country team had won three State Championships (back to back in 1930 and 1931 and again in 1993), which gave it three more than any other team sport at SHS. In recent years the teams had been unremarkable, but with a new coach and new runners, that trend might reverse.

While Matt and Paul speculated about the new coach, Paul's cousin Joe talked to some of the other boys on the team.

"We're gonna make you do all kinds o' stuff," one of the upperclassmen informed him.

"Why?" Joe asked. He generally stayed away from belligerent people, and was unused to bullying. He was constantly reading a book or studying for tests or classes, and he did not involve himself in any wrongdoing or arguments. His sense of humor was beyond his age: it took more than the usual high school antics to make him laugh.

"'Cause you're a freshman. You'll be 'Fish.'"

"What? Why would you call me Fish?"

"There has to be a Fish. I was Fish last year," piped in Josh Matthews, a sophomore. Josh's dark eyes glimmered with amusement. Josh Matthews was distinguished mainly by his stature and humor. He stood about five-and-a-half-feet tall and weighed barely over 100 pounds. He wore a constant grin, and he laughed frequently and enthusiastically. Because he

maintained his easy-come, easy-go demeanor, an electric current was almost palpable when he got serious. He had been on the fringe of the top runners in junior high, but remained inspired enough to continue his running in high school.

“I don’t know, Josh,” Joe replied. He knew Josh a little already from their days together on the junior high team, when Josh had beaten him consistently. Joe did not especially mind. Like Paul, he was a late-bloomer who had improved significantly since middle school. Unlike Paul, Joe had no expectation of ever being the high school’s top runner. He would be lucky to finish among Salem’s top seven.

“You don’t get a choice, freshman,” replied the upperclassman that had begun the discussion. All this talk of seniority was beginning to grate on Joe. Running was the ultimate meritocracy: the fastest seven guys made varsity. It did not matter who was older or who had been on the team longer, honors were accorded based on times.

If Joe had thought about it longer, he might have decided that his teammates cared so much about seniority because they were not very good at actually running. The Salem boys simply were not that fast. There were exceptions. Robert Vogt, who had graduated last year, inspired Salem runners by qualifying as an individual for the Regional Meet. Shane Harding, a senior, was filling Vogt’s spikes and looked as though he might be even faster than he. A good cross country team, however, needs more than a single fast runner. Paul was optimistic in his dreams of glory. But he was not alone in them.

It was during their freshman year, in 2001, that Josh Matthews and Matt Yanek had made an agreement, a “pact” they would later call it. They agreed to win a State Championship by the end of their education at Salem High School, a short four years to accomplish something so few had in the past. What made their dreams all the more unrealistic was that their team failed to reach the Regional Meet that year: Salem was not one

of the top 70 out of 185 teams in its division. By 2002, Vogt, the top runner and team leader, had graduated. The talent coming up from the middle school was modest. As freshmen, Yanek barely ran under nineteen minutes in the 5K (the standard high school distance, roughly 3.1 miles), and Josh had yet to break twenty. If they had been freshman girls, their futures would have been bright. As it was, they seemed naïve to think that in three years Salem could climb past 70 teams, let alone defeat proven programs with considerable experience-advantages at the State Meet in Columbus. Yanek and Josh were secretive about their pact, keeping it to themselves, but using it as a constant motivator to attain their full potential.

Everyone's eyes turned to the car that had just pulled up: red, shiny, a young man's car. And sure enough, the man who stepped out looked young enough to be in college. He seemed to radiate exuberance through his dark skin, from the soles of his running shoes to his gleaming black high top haircut. He smiled like someone who never got tired of smiling. And he was the only man the team had ever seen wearing such short shorts after puberty.

"My name is Michael Almond. I'm your new coach." Even his voice was that of a kid. The words came out high and clear.

"I'm 24 years old, I was a five-time All-American at Malone College, and I'm a Christian. I've been married for just over three years. And I just found out that my wife is four weeks pregnant." So he was young. And a fast runner, to whom a lot of things were happening fast: new job, new team, and new child. It barely occurred to the coach how strange it was for him to mention the news to complete strangers. "We just found out, and you guys are, like, the first people I've told." The honor drew the kids in; evidently Almond cared about them already.

"I grew up in Painesville" Almond continued, "but I've known about Salem for a long time. I was in high school when you

guys won the State Title in '93, and everybody all across the state knew Salem. And do you guys know Jason Julian?" All of the kids had heard the name, and some knew its significance. Jason Julian was the legendary runner who had captained the State Championship team, who still held the school record of 15:53. He made even Robert Vogt and Shane Harding look slow. They knew Jason Julian.

Julian was only one of the great athletes Salem had graduated over the years: others include three NFL players and Jenni Brown, a cross country runner who still holds statewide records. Salem High School had been, at various times, a powerhouse in one or more sports.

SHS is 25 miles south of Youngstown in the northern tip of Columbiana County, and as part of the then job-rich Mahoning Valley, the school graduating class reached a peak of 325 students in 1975. Major college recruiters came to see Quaker athletes compete against the biggest and best teams in the state. But over the years, as industries closed and manufacturing jobs disappeared, students disappeared from Salem's schools. And as SHS hallways emptied, the athletic talent pool drained, and Salem slid into mediocrity. With the school's population dwindling, the Quakers dropped to lower divisions in many sports

"I raced against Julian at Regionals my sophomore year. He was a senior, and everybody thought he was gonna win it. It was at the Boardman course, the same place they hold your Regionals now. It was an insanely cold day. I'm not kidding you; there was three inches of snow on the ground. I mean, it was *cold*.

"Well I beat him, and I won the meet. When the official gave him his second-place medal, Julian took it and threw it on the ground." Some of the more knowledgeable runners were realizing exactly how fast this meant their new coach was. Their respect for him was increasing with each word.

“And my coach at Malone always talked about what a great booster program you have here, and what a great tradition you guys have. So I know about Salem, and I’m glad to be here.” The booster program he mentioned was the X-tra Mile Club, an organization made up of parents of track and cross country runners.

“I want to take this team back to where it was in 1993. My ultimate goal is for us to win a State Championship, and for Salem to go to State every year. I don’t know about this year yet, because we’re starting practices so late.” Late? The first race wasn’t for nearly a month. “All the good teams start in early June. That’s when we’ll start next year. Really, you guys should be running all year. I don’t want a bunch of kids who play other sports that are doing cross country ‘to stay in shape.’ I want you to be committed to running. Because I want Salem to be the best.”

This was the coach Paul, Matt, and Josh had been hoping for. Almond had seen success, and he wanted to show it to all of them. He was holding them to the standards of the Salem he had known, the Salem of ten years ago. But Paul also had his concerns. Never before had he run so many miles in a day or week. Never before had he run every day of the week. He did not like being told to quit basketball, his sport of choice. Ultimately Paul feared change and the unknown. He was a freshman used to the sheltered world of junior high. All of a sudden he had been thrust into a situation with new people who presented Paul with seemingly revolutionary ideas. The only thing that calmed Paul was his will to win, since that was oftentimes all that mattered to him.

“All right, that’s the end of my speech. There won’t be many more of those; I’m not really much of a talker.” Of all the predictions he made that day, this one eventually proved least true.

“Oh, there’s one more thing I’ve gotta tell you guys, just ‘cause it was so weird. My dog gave birth yesterday.” The

juxtaposition of this pregnancy story with his wife's did not seem to strike him as the least bit odd. "And it did it all over our new white carpet. So all the afterbirth and blood and everything was sitting there. My wife and I just moved into our house, and we were like, 'Oh, no, we'll have to clean it all up. It's gonna stain.' But then the dog started eating it and licking the blood up. I guess it's like an adaptation from the wild, so the smell doesn't attract predators. When she was done, the carpet was spotless."

The boys and girls listened with mingled disgust and interest. Almond told the story with the same language any of them would have used, and with a sense of wonder befitting a teenager. Joe felt drawn to the new coach, and he wondered whether the unconventional anecdote had been intended as an icebreaker. As the runners learned more about him, they still found it hard to guess the reasons behind many of his actions. Whether he had hoped to break the tension of his arrival or only to tell a cool story, Almond made a strong impression on the high schoolers sitting in front of him. It is hard not to form some kind of opinion about somebody after he gives a graphic description of animals being born on his rug.

Of course, not everyone liked Almond. The new coach often came off as abrasive: even though he was a newcomer, he made next to no effort at diplomacy. He was especially brusque with kids whom he did not think were committed enough to running. His demands and his personality became too much for some of the students who set off on the road with him that day. But several stuck around, and kept running.

That year, 2002, both the girls and boys teams finished well enough in the District Championships ("Districts," as the runners called it) to qualify for the Regional Meet ("Regionals"). Despite a knee injury, Paul finished third on the team at Districts with a personal record (PR) of eighteen minutes, eleven seconds. Joe also set a PR; his time of 19:18 placed him sixth among the Quakers. Both of them, and the team as a whole, performed much worse the next week at

Regionals. Despite finishing dead last in that race, the Salem boys' cross country team had not enjoyed so much success since 1993.

Senior captain Shane Harding ran well enough at Regionals to advance to the 2002 State Meet as an individual. Many of the underclassmen traveled to Columbus to watch Shane's race, in which he narrowly missed earning All-Ohio status. After seeing the race, the Quakers wanted even more to qualify for State next year. The 2003 team would be relatively inexperienced. The only returning upperclassman was Jason Naylor; the rest would be juniors (Yanek and Matthews) and sophomores (the Shiverses, Jason Stewart, and Andy Thompson). Almond's success as a coach would rely heavily on these runners, and theirs on him.

On October 18, 2003, a little more than a year after meeting Almond for the first time, the Salem Quakers Cross Country Team lined up alongside eighteen other teams at the Trumbull County Fairgrounds to compete for the Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) Northeast District Championship. The team's goal was to finish among the top four teams in that race and qualify for the Regional Meet, one step closer to a berth in the State Meet. The runners stared down the horseracing track that constituted the first few hundred meters of the course, and they focused on the dimly lit stable through which the course ran. Anxiousness shone on all seven of the Salem runners' faces, but confidence dominated their thoughts. Their view shifted to the official, dressed in the standard navy blue OHSAA jacket, standing on a stepladder as he called the runners to their marks. He raised his starter pistol, paused, and then pulled the trigger. At the explosion, all 134 runners broke toward the stable, falling into one giant pack. Salem had begun its mission: to prove that a relatively small school just two years into a new program could compete at the State level.

The crowd, seated in the horse track grandstands, erupted into cheers as the race began. From the gun, Patrick Gorby took off

in an attempt to latch onto the lead pack. His form was nearly perfect; he had a slight forward lean and an efficient arm carriage. He was a lithe 5'8", 110 with coarse black hair and a long forehead. Patrick appeared effortless as he sprinted to the front of the race; his face would remain stoic and his breathing light throughout the race. Though only a freshman, he had beaten everyone on the team in all but two races this season. What set him apart from was not a higher level of dedication, but an "I must win" attitude. He believed that he was the best, and if he fell short, he could always rationalize it and preserve his self-confidence.

At the beginning of the year, Patrick was the dark horse of the team. He was a freshman coming off a spectacular eighth grade year, but no one knew what to expect from him. Gorby had excessive amounts of energy, constantly bugged the upperclassmen, and did not take well to misbehavior or pranks. He was persuaded to run track as a seventh grader and soon found just how good he was. In his first high school meet, he astonished everyone by placing second overall and leading the team. Over the course of the year he had continued to amaze his teammates and coaches.

Gorby took the lead, with a front-running style derived from his hero, Steve Prefontaine. He led his competition down the initial straightaway, into an empty stable. After passing through the building, the course ran several hundred meters to the opposite side of the fairgrounds. From there, it wove through rows of stables and made a quick loop around a lightly wooded area. Finally, the path extended back to the grandstands, where it led back toward the starting line. Then the loop repeated itself, returned to the horse track, and broke off into a finish line. Gorby visualized the remainder of the course as he slowed to his "race pace." Following closely behind him was Aiman Scullion, Almond's first recruit.

If one got to know Aiman, he was the cockiest, most arrogant person anyone would ever care to meet. But he disguised this astonishingly well with meek and humble manners. His father

was a Salem grad who traveled abroad after high school. He met Aiman's mother in Africa, and soon thereafter was married to her. Aiman was born in Morocco and raised on an American military base there; he made the trip to America in fourth grade. He had short curly hair and stood 6'3". His body had developed at a constant pace; he had been relatively short in junior high. He was a thin 135 and appeared to be even lighter.

His first love was soccer. Because of his commitment to that sport, Aiman had not run his freshman year, though he had been a top-five runner in eighth grade (when soccer had not been offered as a school sport). His training that year was shaky, and he failed to beat Paul once. During their freshman year of track, Paul received all the attention from the track coach. Aiman was largely ignored, despite his blooming talent. His body was finally developing into an ideal running frame, and he had natural endurance to back it up. Almond nearly gave up on Aiman after he failed to break 11 minutes in the 3200-meter run that year, but the coach succeeded in recruiting him for the 2003 Cross Country season. Aiman did not quit soccer, however. Under Salem rules, he could play two sports in the same season, but had to declare a primary sport. Aiman chose soccer, so he had to attend every soccer game and practice—a price he readily paid for the sport he loved. He did not necessarily *like* running, in contrast. But he desperately wanted to win, to be the best at something, and soccer just was not offering him that.

He got off to an impressive start in the 2003 season, opening under 17:30 and placing second on the team. It was the first cross country race in which he had ever beaten Paul, and his confidence was buoyed. Playing two sports soon caught up with him, however, and he went into a midseason slump. Now that his mileage was tapered down and his workouts were scheduled around soccer games, he was ready for a breakout performance in the tournaments.

Opening characteristically slowly was Paul, who steadily progressed through the pack as it traversed the dirt floor of the stable. Paul thrived on blowing by runners throughout the race, and he started the race near last place. Once he had a sense of how his body was handling the pace, he could adjust and move up to the front. Today he was exaggerating this strategy so that he might run with even splits - that is, run each of the race's three miles in the same amount of time. As he accelerated to pass a crowd of runners he noticed his teammate, Ryan Griffith, who had displayed his inexperience in the sport by opening with the leaders. Now, he was falling back to the middle of the field. Ryan's boyish face turned briefly as Paul passed, then focused back on the path ahead.

Ryan showed up for his first run in early August of 2003, on the first day of mandatory practice. The team had already been practicing together all summer, and no one had expected any newcomers so close to the start of the official season. The shoes he wore, Converse, revealed his total ignorance of the sport. His cargo shorts, heavy t-shirt, and stunt bike exemplified everything a runner should not have. But despite his weighty clothes and clunky shoes, he hung on through that run, a seven-mile workout. He came back, too, and became as much a part of the team as those who had been there for two months. His playful personality paralleled Gorby's, and the two got along quite well. He did not delve too deeply into the sport early on, but he soon noticed he was fighting for a varsity spot. His gradual improvement put him among the team's top seven by the end of the season, and Almond selected him to represent Salem in the District Meet.

Shortly after passing Ryan, Paul moved past Joe. At six feet and 140 pounds, Joe was the same height as his cousin, and slightly heavier. He usually finished a minute or so behind Paul, who now moved forward toward the next pack of runners. Joe barely noticed as Paul disappeared from view: he was having the race of his life.

Joe had been sixth man on the Salem team for most of the 2003 season, but in the two races before Districts he had lost his spot. At the Metro Athletic Conference (MAC) Championship meet, senior Jason Naylor had beaten him. The week before Districts, Joe had lost to Ryan Griffith and Josh Matthews at the Sim Earich Invitational. Sim Earich, like Districts, was held at the Trumbull County Fairgrounds. That race was the worst of Joe's season, and it shook Almond's confidence in him. The coach let Joe run varsity at Districts under one condition: if Joe ran a third bad race in a row, Almond would replace him with Jason Naylor for the rest of the postseason.

Joe had never run a race under as much pressure as was on him today at Districts. In the morning, hours before the race, anxiety had almost paralyzed him. Then after the team's warm-up jog, fifteen minutes before the race, he had gained an inexplicable confidence. Joe felt an absolute certainty that he would earn the right to keep his varsity spot. All he had to do was beat Ryan, as he had in every race but Sim Earich. Cross country was the easiest sport in the world, he thought. When Paul passed him 400 yards into the race, Joe was already practically celebrating. The next two-plus miles would be his victory lap.

Paul continued his assault on the now strung-out pack as they made the first turn and began the nearly half-mile straightaway. He jumped to the outside, into the thicker, unmowed grass to pass the many runners still ahead of him. As he moved out of the horserace track and onto a gravel path he overcame yet another teammate, the capricious Mike Overholser.

Mike was a former wrestler who had been recruited by Andy Thompson, who himself played both sports. Mike stood 5'8", with naturally tan skin and coarse brown hair. He joined the team in the summer but rarely came to practice. Just when he was showing signs of improvement he disappeared. No one knew exactly where he was: whether on vacation, out of town

with relatives, or just not at practice. When camp rolled around in August, Mike reappeared, and in better shape than Almond or anyone else had imagined. Perhaps because of his limited summer training, Mike never had a breakout race, though he maintained a top five spot throughout the year. The team was relying on him to boost them among the elite teams, but too often he seemed uninterested in running--sometimes even during races. Mike Overholser was a blister for Almond, causing frequent pain and requiring constant attention; the boy's fiery personality sparked many arguments, and forcing him to attend practice had been a summer-long struggle. But his talent could not be overlooked, and Almond made it a priority to bring out Mike's full potential.

After a dizzying maze of turns around stables and paddocks, Paul crossed the first mile in a decent time of 5:25. He was on pace for under 17, but, more importantly, he had not killed himself to hit his goal time in the first third of the race. By now he had passed dozens of competitors and four teammates—Matt Yanek, Mike Overholser, Joe Shivers, and Ryan Griffith. As Paul picked off runner after runner, Jason Naylor, the alternate, and Josh Matthews, who had not qualified for varsity, stood screaming their encouragement. Matthews had put in the miles, the time, and the effort to be a varsity runner, but simply had not run the solid late season races Ryan had. Almond chose the senior, Jason, as alternate over Matthews because Jason had a faster PR, and in the event of an injury or poor performance by a top-seven runner, Jason would have a better chance of providing the team with a worthy performance. Despite the setback, Josh stayed true to his team and showed up at the meet. His teammates respected him for that.

At the start of the second lap, Paul, for the first time all season, caught and passed Patrick, who was now fading. The freshman's opening sprint to the front had cost him a lot of energy, and he now looked as if he were running through sand. Mike and Yanek, a way back, fell into stride with each other

and would maintain a connection the rest of the race. Paul, now on the long straightaway for the second time, caught sight of Aiman about a hundred meters ahead of him. He crossed the two-mile mark in 10:55 and continued towards Aiman. By the end of the stretch, they were running together until, finally, Paul made a move with 1000 meters to go, around what had been the first mile mark. His adrenaline was up; he began a surge to the finish and a possible sub-17 minute 5K. He remembered Almond asking him “What are you going to run today, Paul?” and replying “I’m going to run a 16:55 today; this course is fast.” Almond had grinned at Paul’s predictions, as he had run 17:21 the previous week on the same course.

The crowd’s roar grew exponentially louder in Paul’s ears as he closed towards the racetrack and the finish line. It reached its peak as he rounded the corner of the grandstands and stepped onto the raked dirt track. Only two runners had held off his powerful third mile; they finished out of reach of Paul’s limited sprinting speed. Paul began kicking towards the finish with all of his remaining energy. As he crossed the finish line, his arms went limp and he stumbled through the chute. Seconds later, he turned to see Gorby finishing, followed closely by Aiman. They exchanged high fives and words of congratulations as they waited for the remainder of their team. Many runners later, Matt and Mike finished. The team concluded with Joe some 30 seconds behind them and Ryan a few seconds later.

The team gathered in a remote area of the grandstands. Since they had not all seen each other finish, the Quakers reported on their times and places. Paul had managed to run his 16:55, proving his coach wrong and taking third place. Patrick was right behind him in fifth with a 17:03. The freshman hardly acknowledged that Paul had beaten him. Right behind Gorby, Aiman placed sixth in 17:05. Likewise, Matt and Mike were within seconds of each other at 17:37 and 17:43, respectively. They finished 22nd and 27th in the race, which put Salem’s score at 60 points. This total was calculated by assigning

Salem the number of points that corresponded to the finishing spot of each of the top five runners, disregarding the finishes of runners who did not have five-man teams. Thus Yanek scored only 21 points; the race was scored as if one of the boys in front of him (a boy with only two teammates) had not run.

Almond jogged up to his runners. “Guys, that was awesome!” “Did we win, Coach?” Paul asked, still short of breath.

“I don’t know,” Almond replied. “It’s gonna be close between us and Mooney.” Cardinal Mooney, a Catholic school in Youngstown, had five solid runners including the meet champion, Colin Durina. While the boys waited for the officials to process the results, they headed back to the team’s tent. They grabbed some of the snacks that the X-tra Mile Club had provided, and their parents and teammates congratulated them. Jason Naylor, Josh Matthews, Lance Murphy, Andy Thompson, Jason Stewart, and Tommy Yuhaniak gave them high-fives and “good jobs.” Paul, despite “PR-ing” and leading the team for the first time since Junior High, was not ready to celebrate the race yet - he was waiting to learn if the team had won. It mattered little; Salem was on its way to Regionals whether it finished first or second in the District. But Paul still wanted to win.

The results soon came in, showing that the race was indeed close: a tie, in fact. Salem and Cardinal Mooney both scored 60 points, so the officials went to a tie-breaker: the finishing places of the two teams’ respective sixth runners. Joe’s 18:18 beat the sixth Mooney runner’s time to seal the meet, and Salem was crowned District Champion.

Almond shouted over the cheering boys and girls that swarmed Joe, “Didn’t I tell you just the other day how important each runner is to the team? Ties happen all the time in tournament meets.”

