

Running star keeps pace with kids

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

IRONDEQUOIT — When Dan Lesser decided to be a summer-camp counselor, he probably figured he was suited perfectly for the job.

After all, Lesser has spent the several years attempting to keep up with hordes of energy-packed youngsters.

He has succeeded overwhelmingly in that area, having recently completed an outstanding running career at McQuaid Jesuit High School. As he awaits his freshman year at Brown University this fall, Lesser is filling in his time by working with the day-camp program through the Town of Irondequoit's Parks and Recreation Department.

For those closely associated with the 18-year-old Lesser, his choice for summer employment was not a surprising one.

His work with youth has been extensive, from performing service projects with elementary-school students to serving as mentor for younger athletes coming up through the McQuaid cross-country and track programs.

This past year, Lesser and several of his classmates from McQuaid — an all-boys' high school in Brighton — spent volunteer time with co-educational classes at Corpus Christi and Nazareth Hall elementary schools in Rochester.

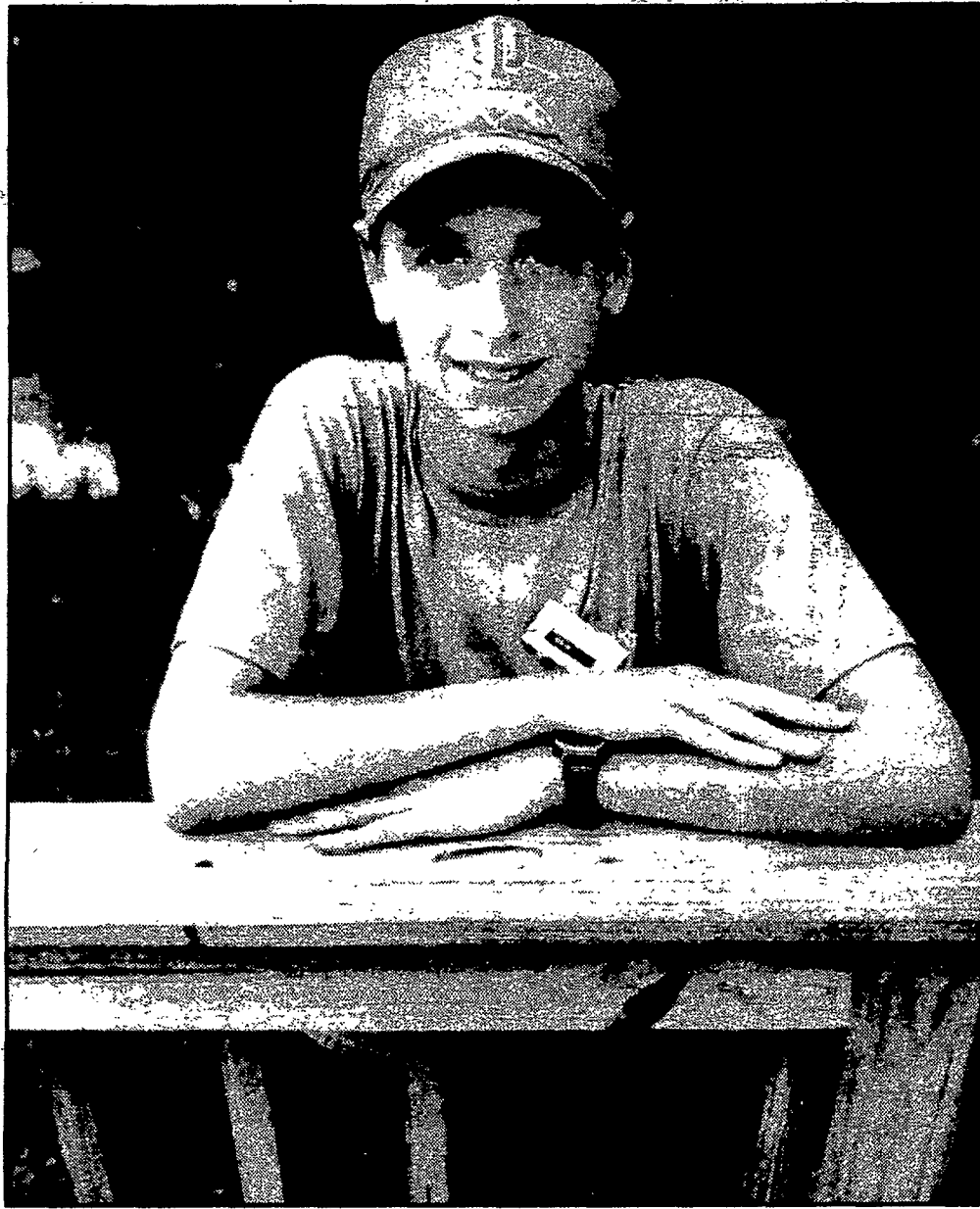
"It's something I enjoy. It's important for the guys to get involved like that; it's important for kids to see a strong male role model," Lesser observed.

It is for those same reasons that Lesser, a parishioner at St. Salome's Church in Irondequoit, has served as a catechist for the past two years in the parish's preschool "Mini Bible" program.

Making a positive influence has also been vital to Lesser in the world of athletics.

"Last year a lot of our team graduated, so we were young and inexperienced," said Lesser. "It was up to me and Adam (Reitz) to lend our experience."

Lesser learned about the value of mentoring from Bob Bradley, McQuaid's veteran cross-country coach, who took Lesser under his wing when he was a relative unknown with the pro-



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Dan Lesser pauses for a photo at Camp Eastman, located in Durand-Eastman Park, where he works with youths as a summer-camp counselor. Lesser will be attending Brown University this fall.

gram back in his freshman year.

"He's someone anybody would look up to and want to copy," Lesser said of Bradley. "He's not the kind of coach that just cares about the elite runners."

As it turned out, Lesser and Reitz did reach the elite stage over the next four years. In their senior season, they led McQuaid to a clean sweep of Section 5 championships — in cross-country, indoor track and outdoor track.

Individually, Lesser was equally im-

pressive. He won Section 5 titles in cross-country, indoor track's 3,200-meter run and outdoor track's 3,200 and 1,600 runs.

At the state level, an illness-plagued Lesser placed a respectable seventh in cross-country last November. He came back at full strength to win the state 3,200 indoor championship in February of this year before closing out his high-school career with a second-place showing in the outdoor 3,200 in June.

Lesser expects to run both cross-country and track at Brown. He also plans on majoring in biology at the Rhode Island-based Ivy League college.

And, if all falls into place, Lesser will continue his involvement with youths in the upcoming months.

"I hope to. I have no idea what kind of time commitments I'll have, but it's a real high priority," he said.

Openings still exist

for benefit golf events

Several charity golf tournaments have been scheduled to take place within the diocese during the upcoming months. Organizers have notified the *Catholic Courier* of the following events:

- Syracuse University basketball Coach Jim Boeheim and newly appointed Portland Trail Blazers Coach P.J. Carlesimo are the featured guests for the American Cancer Society's Walter Hagen Memorial event on Monday, Aug. 1, at Irondequoit Country Club in Pittsford. Various playing, dinner and sponsorship packages are still available by calling Kirsten Van Ostrand at 716/288-1950.

- Action for a Better Community will conduct the James McCuller Memorial Golf Outing, scheduled for Aug. 8 at Green Hills Country Club in Mendon. The event will benefit ABC's Day Care Program. For details, call 716/325-5116.

- The "L and PGA" — also known as Laity and Pastors' Golf Academy — Tournament will take place Aug. 15-17 at Corning Country Club, Willow Creek Golf Club in Big Flats, and Soaring Eagles Golf Course in Horseheads. The event is open to laity and clergy of all denominations, and is being presented by the Watson Homestead Conference and Retreat Center in Painted Post. For details, call 607/962-0541.

- The Bill McPadden Tournament will take place Aug. 16 at Shadow Pines Golf Club in Penfield. Proceeds will support outreach programs operated through by Rochester's Corpus Christi Church. Call Al McPadden at 716/458-9388 for details.

- The March of Dimes Business Classic will take place Aug. 22 at Cobblestone Creek Country Club in Victor. For information, call 716/338-9030.

- The John Bednarski Celebrity Tournament is set for Aug. 22 at Shadow Pines and Shadow Lake golf clubs in Penfield. Proceeds will support the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation's Rochester chapter. For details, call 716/546-5890.

- The Faith Haven Love Links Tournament is scheduled for Aug. 25 at Bristol Harbour Golf Club in Canandaigua. Proceeds will benefit Faith Haven, a non-profit residence facility for unwed women in crisis pregnancies. For tournament information, call 716/374-5659.



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