

## THE 1974 GIRLS' CROSS-COUNTRY TEAM

The success of the Bedford High School girls' cross-country team in 1974 – only one regular season loss, second place in the regional championship and runner-up in the state meet – is a lesson in history, determination and pride.

Coach Bill Keup pointed out that 1974 was only the third year of interscholastic cross-country for girls at BHS, and the first year the sport was funded. He recalled the genesis of the sport at the high school, when as boys' X-C coach in 1972 he acceded to some girls' request to train with his team.

“That was when Title 9 was coming in,” he explained. Title 9 of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act required gender equity in every educational program that received federal funding. So it was an opportune time to launch a women's team. “Cross-country is not that expensive, and many schools jumped on board,” he said. Assistant Principal Eleanor Donovan was in charge of implementing Title 9 at Bedford High, “and she was all for it.”

The 1973 team had loads of talent, but “we kind of scrounged around for meets,” the coach said. Then the girls won the Northern Area Championship and finished third in the state meet. One year later, Coach Keup directed a core of seven returning girls – all underclasswomen --- who finished with a regular-season record of 10-1, lost to Bishop Fenwick in the Northern Area, then beat Fenwick in the state meet and finished second overall to powerhouse Falmouth.

That team was led consistently by Sue Wooton, who set several course records through the fall. Her teammates were Maribeth Barck, Sue Boissevain, Lori Browne, Sue Goldman, Abby Hafer and Maureen Hanley.

“For the first three years we wore the boys' old cross-country running sweat suits. Mine was so big I had to hold the pants up with a safety pin,” recalled Susanne Boissevain Rothchild. “We didn't receive varsity letters for the first two years, but were awarded them retroactively. But we had great camaraderie on our team, worked hard and supported each other.”

The seven were dominant during the regular season. In an early-season dual meet vs. Lexington High, they all finished in the top 10. Then on Sept. 28, they swept the Acton Invitational. Sue Wooton was first, Sue Boissevain third, Maribeth fourth, Maureen fifth, and Sue Goldman seventh for 20 points. Abby was out of the scoring but finished seventh; the six all finished in a window of 1:41.

Twenty teams and more than 100 girls competed in the Northerns in November. Sue Wooton came in fourth, Sue Boissevain 12<sup>th</sup>, and Maribeth, Abby and Sue Goldman 17-19-20, but the 72 points weren't enough to overtake Fenwick. (Finishing second in the junior high division was Hall of Famer Kim Ginder '79.)

The state meet took place on Nov. 16 (the same day the Hall of Fame swim team won its state championship) along a 2.5-mile course in Franklin Park, Dorchester. More than 250 athletes

from 67 high schools were at the starting line, and things were congested to say the least as the gun sounded. Bedford's score was 183, second only to Falmouth. Sue Wooton again led the scorers with a 13<sup>th</sup>-place finish. The other scorers were Sue Boissevain (25), Maribeth (26), Maureen (43) and Abby (76).

“Running and being on the team gave me so much confidence, improved my discipline and gave some of my best memories from high school,” Sue Rothchild reflected.