

PROFILE ON:

Jeff Nelson

by BILL MINARIK



photo by Leon Frankamp

JEFF WALTER NELSON: Burbank High School senior. Age 17. Born March 28, 1961, in Van Nuys, California.

Best Marks: 4:28 and 9:28 as a sophomore; 4:21 and 8:59 as a junior. Coached by Dave Kemp.

Anyone who had doubts that Burbank High distance star Jeff Nelson, was the state's top prep distance runner after his two close two mile win in last year's State High School Track Championships must have had those doubts dispelled after seeing Jeff complete what

was probably the greatest cross country season in California prep history.

After beginning the season by obliterating state mile champ, Paul Medvin, in the Kenny Staub Invitational, Jeff continued undefeated right through the CIF Championships breaking every course record in the process; and as Jeff's coach, Dave Kemp pointed out, the closest anyone came to Jeff was teammate lin Whatcott in a league dual meet.

Even more remarkable than the cross country season was Jeff's comeback from injuries to win the state two mile title last track season. While rolling along to what appeared to be a good season (9:16 PR), he felt a pain in his foot during a workout. An examination showed him to have a stress fracture; and in addition he was found to have bronchitis. Couple that with a knee problem and back spasms that had prematurely ended his junior cross country season and it looked like track season was also over. However, thanks to a 12 month training program and a bicycle exercise routine, Jeff was able to stay in competitive condition until the final dual meet of the season when he was able to return to track training. Even after resuming competition, Jeff didn't expect to be a contender for the state title. But then, as Jeff tells it, "I found that during the CIF prelims and finals, I was able to stay right with the leaders for almost the whole race. I knew then I had a chance to win it all."

Even after winning the state qualifying meet most experts were still tabing Redwood High's Rod Berry, the prior year runner-up to be first. However, anyone who remembers the cover of the June, 1978 issue of *California Track News* knows it was Jeff who pulled out a near photo finish.

When asked what his goal for this track season was now that he is on top in both track and cross country, Jeff replied, "To stay healthy." Well, it seems that he has lined up a very healthy schedule, which includes all the big indoor meets and possibly the World Junior Cross Country Championships, as well as a full compliment of outdoor meets.