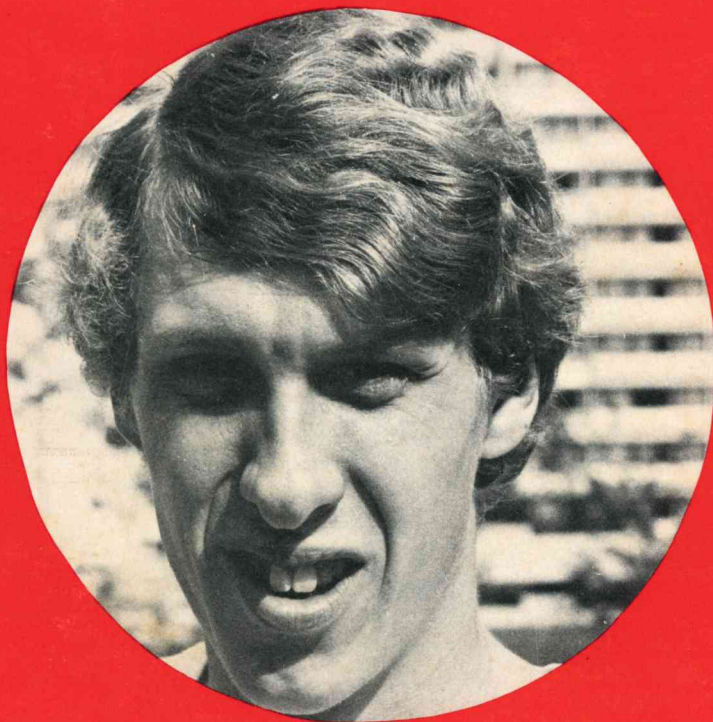


# DAVE WOTTLE STORY





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# DAVE WOTTLE STORY

by Jim Ferstle

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# FOREWORD

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"I keep doing the wrong things and I keep winning," Dave Wottle said after Munich. "I still don't believe the world record, let alone the gold medal."

Eight-hundred meters has his second event, he had said. He preferred the 1500. Then he tied the world record for the shorter race in the Olympic Trials. That race made famous the white golf cap he wears in races, and the withering kick he turns on at the end. Those two trademarks helped Dave rise to almost legendary proportions in the space of a few months during 1972.

His tactics are unorthodox. He drops behind at first—too far behind, it sometimes seems—then relies on his final spurt to win. At Munich, he didn't appear to have a chance. He had been injured between the Trials and the Games. At Munich, he let a dangerously wide gap open up in the 800-meter final. Then he raced back, waiting until the last step to claim his victory. Then he forgot to take off his white golf cap during the victory ceremony.

The year after Munich, Wottle was back to miling. He ran one of the fastest times in history (3:53.3)—though he says time doesn't concern him in his races. A fascinating man, this Dave Wottle.

Wottle has talked at length with Jim Ferstle, author of this booklet. Ferstle has a special knowledge of and interest in Wottle. Jim first saw the budding Olympic champion in the Ohio state high school meet of 1968, and immediately appraised him as anything but gold medal material.

Wottle and Ferstle were to become teammates and close friends at Bowling Green State University, where the groundwork for Dave's successes was laid and where much of this story is set.

Ferstle's booklet looks at Wottle from three different vantage points. One is Dave's view of himself. For this chapter, Ferstle drew the highlights from hours of taped conversations. "These," says Jim, "are his words, his views and in the end they tell his story."

The second chapter is the author's account of Wottle as a maturing middle distance runner at Bowling Green, seen through the eyes of one who was running with him then.

Ferstle says, "I did much of the coverage for Bowling Green's track and cross-country teams while in college, as well as running on the team. My memories are based on notes, stories and various memorabilia I've saved of these years. In essence, this is my view."

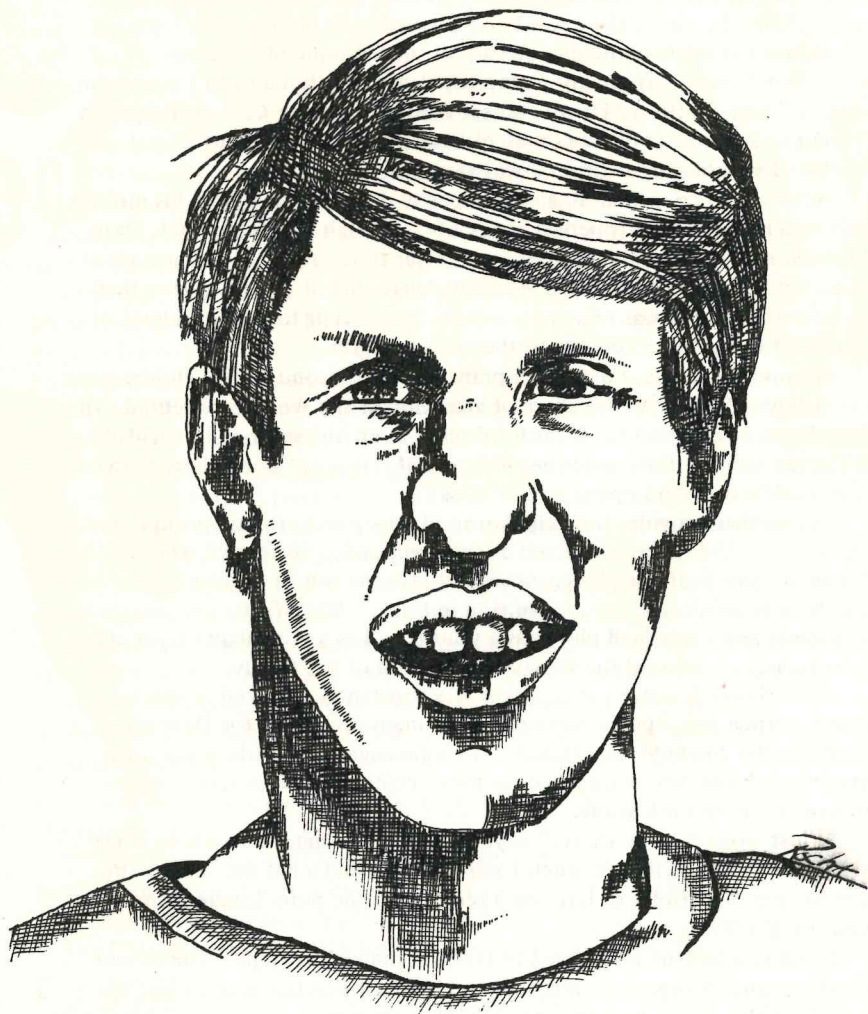
Finally, we hear from Dave's coach, Mel Brodt—the man who nursed an often-injured young man through four years of college, persuading Dave to do the training he admittedly loathed. Brodt's remarks are synthesized from a speech to the Ohio Association of Track Coaches' Clinic in early 1973, and from correspondence with Ferstle.

Inevitably, there is some overlap among the three viewpoints. But taken together they offer a revealing portrait of the man behind the medal.



## Chapter I

# AN INTROVERT



LEFT: In '72 Olympic Trials. (Stan Pantovic)

# FROM T.V. TO TRACK

“Well, of course I was born. But after that a lot of things happened.”

That’s how Dave Wottle would tell you it all began. Dr. Bernard Bonnett brought an eight-pound four-ounce, 21-inch baby into the world on Aug. 7, 1950. By 1972, Dave was known world-wide because of a battered golf cap and a come-from-behind victory in the Olympic 800 meters.

“I don’t really have many memories of my childhood until I was about five or so,” says Wottle. “Then I just sat around watching Captain Penny on TV, went to school and had a couple of bad experiences there because I was so scared of school at that time. I was very introverted.”

Active, well-coordinated, a sensitive, shy daydreamer is how his mother remembers him during this period of his life. Though a good student, Dave fell behind in reading and had to repeat it after third grade. It was not mandatory, but the teacher felt Dave would be better off if he did. Other than that, however, school was relatively trouble free except for the problems of an introvert in his first exposure to the outside world.

Around the home, Dave was a prankster, the second of five children and the first boy. He received his share of attention at the Wottle household. His father, James, worked in the local Ford plant as an inspector and provided well for the family. Dave describes their social status as “somewhere between middle-middle class and upper-middle class.”

His mother provides the neighborhood gossip and athletic background to the family. She describes herself as somewhat of a “tomboy” whose father, a former sandlot football player, once told Dave he was in a “sissy” sport because “you couldn’t get any recognition in track.” Mrs. Wottle’s experiences as a tumbler and basketball player as a youth, and as a volleyball player after her marriage, contributed the sports background of the family.

As a relatively active youth, Dave was constantly involved in sports. Like any normal boy, sports was one of the main diversions for Dave after TV and playing cowboys and Indians. He exchanged his cowboy hat for a purple baseball hat, which signified his membership on the Orioles, a team he joined in the seventh grade.

“I just wore it everywhere,” says Wottle of the hat. “Just about every time I see a picture of myself when I was young, I had a hat on. Either the purple hat for the Orioles or later on a red hat for the pony league team I played for, the White Sox.”

From baseball, he progressed to track in the eighth grade. The school was just starting an organized program and the first practice session had the kids circling the school building in non-competitive relays.

“I remember that I strained a muscle,” says Dave of his first attempt at running. “I went out real fast and must have pulled a groin muscle. It hurt real bad and the coach, who was also my home-room teacher, asked me



if anything was wrong. I told him 'no'."

After two days' absence from school because he couldn't walk properly, Wottle faced an angry teacher when he returned.

"He yelled at me and told me that the next time I got an injury I'd better tell him or else," Dave says. "I was a little afraid to tell him because I really didn't know what they'd do to me—if they'd take me to a doctor or whatever—which just reflects a little bit of the way I was in grade school, and until my junior year in high school. How shy and introverted I was then."

The initial bad experience did not sour Wottle to running, but since his high school—Lincoln of Canton, Ohio did not have a cross-country program, Dave's introduction came during the track season. Even then it was almost by chance that he became involved in the sport that was to later make him famous.

Basketball season had just finished and the freshmen team was holding its last meeting at the same time as the track meeting. After starting as a seventh and eighth grader, Wottle was 14th man on a 15-man freshman squad in high school. So he began to look elsewhere for "his" sport.

"I thought it would be a good idea to try out for track," he says. "Try as many sports as I could to find out which was the best for me. I got to the meeting late because of the basketball meeting, and I tried to get into the room. The door seemed to be locked. I couldn't get in and I remember this very vividly. I figured that if the door was locked I didn't want to knock on the door because the coach, who was probably giving a speech right then, would have to stop, walk over and open the door especially for me. Then I'd have to walk in with all those kids looking at me.

"So I turned around and walked down the hall. I must have gotten 20 feet down the hall when I thought to myself, 'Oh, the heck with it. Try it out. This is your last chance. If you don't make this meeting you won't be able to go out for the track team, and then you won't know what it's like, and you won't know if you're going to be good at it. I should do something in the spring. I should try and be an athlete.'

"So I went back and the door was just stuck. When I was trying to get in, jiggling the knob, the coach must have heard me, or he heard me when I was there the first time, because he was right by the door and he opened it up and let me in. I walked in and I remember everybody stopped and was looking at me when I walked to the back of the room. A lot of kids were laughing and one of them said, 'Oh, it's Wottle', because I really wasn't a good athlete then."

Not knowing much about the sport of track, Wottle signed up as a sprinter.

"I'd always thought I was kind of fast," he says. "I don't think I ever knew there was a mile or a half-mile, so I signed up for the sprints."

But it soon became apparent that while he was fast he would never be the US's answer to Valeriy Borzov. He moved up to the 880 and mile and found a home.

In the team's first time-trial, Wottle beat the best distance man at the school. That 880-yard run was the first warning of what was in store for future opponents as the Wottle kick was unveiled on a track in Canton in the spring of 1965.

He didn't fare as well in his first race, however, as his enthusiasm and inexperience taught him a lesson he has not forgotten.

"When I took my sweats off I felt really good, really free and I went out real quick," says Wottle. "I think I went out in about 61 (seconds for the first quarter), which was quick for me back then. I had about 20-25 yards on the nearest guy. I didn't know how to run a race. A lot of people say I still don't know how to run one yet. But I *really* didn't know how to run one then. What happened was I really died on the last lap. Two Massillon guys passed me and I ended up third in 2:14."

Dave took his share of lumps his freshman year, winning only two races and finishing with bests of 4:50 and 2:08.6. His biggest disappointment was losing the first ribbon he ever won for stepping off the track at the Canton Twilight meet.

"I stumbled on about the second lap of the mile and I ran about three or four steps off the track. I remember it really broke me up because it was the first ribbon I'd ever won in track, and it meant a lot to me even though it was fifth place. They took the ribbon away from me.

"The biggest reason I kept going in track until my sophomore year and thought that I had a half-decent chance was the half-mile. I had run 2:08.6 and the school record was 2:07.3. I was real close and I thought I had a real good chance of breaking the record next year."

"Right after track was over, I stopped running," he adds. "I didn't run again until next track season. We didn't run cross-country at Canton Lincoln."

During the summer he painted houses, "had a good time" and played pony league baseball. When school started again in September he went back to his "daily routine."

"After school, I'd go out and play football with the guys and then I'd come back and watch TV. I used to be a walking TV guide. I'd know what was on every day on every channel. My dad would just have to ask what was on and I'd rattle it off, because I watched TV so much. In track season, I'd go out to the track and work out after school until about six o'clock. Then I'd come home and watch TV. I'd study a little bit and watch TV, or watch TV then study a little bit.

"I didn't study that much, maybe an hour, hour and a half every other day or so. I wasn't very smart. I ended up with a 2.9 average in high school but I still wasn't that brainy. I took the college prep courses and I wasn't as smart as a lot of other the kids. I just didn't study and I had to study in order to get good grades."

Wottle wasn't a student of track either, but his natural ability and determination brought him results.

"I enjoyed the half-mile better my freshman year," says Wottle. "I stuck mostly to the half for the first three meets, then they moved me up to the mile. From then on, I always ran the mile and I was considered a miler in high school. I think that's why I prefer the mile over the half right now. I feel more confident in it because I've run it in more big races."

His coach, Everett Daniels, was a sprinter in college and didn't really know a great deal about how to handle a budding distance star.

He really had a good sprinter named John Cosmedes, who was a 9.6 sprinter," says Dave. "Since Coach Daniels was a sprinter himself, he was

more inclined to help John out. It wasn't until my senior year that coach Daniels finally noticed that I might be able to be something and started paying more attention to me. He paid attention to me all along, but not as much as he did in my senior year.

"I have to admit, Coach Daniels tried to learn as much as he could about distances. He did a pretty good job because we did have a fairly strong distance team after I was there for a couple of years. I think I owe him quite a bit for teaching me what little I did know about track."

"Before a race I was really psyched up," says Wottle. "I'd just get mentally prepared to go out and beat the other guys."

During his junior year prayer became a factor in Dave's pre-race mental preparation.

"My junior year I started praying before my races and I've continued that up to this time. I think it has helped me quite a bit. It's very relaxing to me to know that the Lord is at my side and that I can do no wrong if he's with me.

"During the race I hurt," says Dave. "The workouts I did really weren't that strenuous, but I always did have that finishing kick. I've had it ever since my first race, and I think I always will. I hope so.

"After the race I was always really tired. I remember after I ran one two-miles. (I ran only about two of them in high school. I ran 10:30 and 10:43). Boy, I remember I was hurting. My abdominal muscles were just so sore, I remember I just was bent over it was so painful. I told Coach Daniels that I'd never run another two-mile. I don't think I did. I stuck to the mile and half-mile. But that reflects a little bit of the kind of shape I was in. I wasn't in real good shape to hold up for things like that.

"The way we did it at Canton Lincoln is that we would start working out in April. April 1 was the first day of workouts. We'd start working out in the high school itself and we'd run in the halls, mostly running up the stairs for strength and down the halls just to get in a little volume. Then if we'd get a clear day we'd go out to the park that is right across from the school. It was a half-mile in circumference and we'd run around it a couple of times."

Once on the track, the routine was similar for all four years Wottle attended Canton Lincoln. The team would jog one or two laps and meet in front of the gym for calisthenics. There would be an organized exercise session, like a football team with team leaders. Once that was finished, they would jog one or two more laps and begin the workout.

Workouts consisted of 440's, 660's, 330's 220's and very rarely 1320's. The most typical workout was 6-8 quarters in 65-66.

"I did not run down (warm down)," says Wottle. "Some of the kids might have, but I did not. The coach really didn't stress it that much so I didn't run down. I'd simply run in my underwear, come in from the workout and take off my running shorts and put on my pants and go home. Then when I got home I'd take my shower there. I was afraid to undress in front of the guys."

"It took a while to get over that," Dave admits. "It took until the latter part of my junior year and my senior year until I could do things like that. This reflects, once again, on how shy and introverted I was. I had a

better time when I was by myself in my room. I'd sit up there and listen to records, draw things, make charts of things. I would do all kinds of things by myself.

"I fixed up the attic and it was my place. I had a couch, a table, a radio and right in the middle of the room I had a weight set. I can remember going up there maybe four, five times a week. I would be up there for 2-3 hours and I'd play cards, listen to the radio, take up my record player. I'd just be by myself and doing things by myself. I lifted weights and I think that's where I got a lot of my strength in my upper body, from this two-year period where I lifted weights maybe four or five times a week. You can't help but get a little strength when you're lifting that much and I enjoyed it."

During this period, sophomore through junior years, Wottle developed into one of the top milers in Ohio. His sophomore year was highlighted by a double victory in the Canton All-City meet in the mile and half-mile. He finished the season with a sixth in the district meet, one place away from qualifying for the regionals, with best times of 4:38.6 and 2:04.7.

His junior year, Wottle won the Canton meet in the mile, was second in the half. He won the district in 4:27, the regional with 4:22.4 and was fourth in the state in 4:23.9. His bests were 4:22.4 and 2:00.2.

"I stopped running after the state meet my junior year but I came back a little bit earlier," says Wottle. "In September, I started running again this time. Before, I'd always stop running until April.

"It was just easy stuff, two miles here, two miles there, nothing long, nothing over three miles. I ran with a teammate of mine, our best two-miler. It was almost an every night thing. The coach gave us the keys to the locker room so we could get in there. We ran almost every day."

Wottle received his first exposure to indoor competition during his senior year at the Pittsburgh Invitational.

"We ran our trials in a cow barn two weeks before the meet," Wottle recalls. "I ran 4:24, but we found out later that it was 60 yards short of a mile. Coach Daniels didn't know that, and I didn't know that, so I thought I was in tremendous shape because it was in the winter and I was running 4:24."

Dave won the half at Pitt in 2:03 and was on his way to the state title in the spring. Dave again scored a double victory in the mile and half in the Canton city meet, won the district in 4:27.3, the regional in 4:22.2, the state in a PR of 4:20.2. He also recorded a best of 1:59.4 in the half.

State champions usually gather their share of scholarship offers, but in Dave's case there was no recruiter from Oregon or Villanova offering a full ride to him. His decision was between Mt. Union, a small school in Ohio known for its track program, and Bowling Green.

"Coach Daniels did have a big part in the decision on where to go to college," says Dave. "We sat down one day and talked about what I wanted out of track. We had a very good relationship, Coach Daniels and I. We were always able to talk to each other. He sat me down and told me the advantages of a big college, the advantages of a small college and the disadvantages of both, and he asked me what I wanted out of track. I told him that I would like to go to a school where, if I was good enough, they would let me travel

wherever I wanted to go. If I made it big, that I would be able to go to the big meets.

“He told me that Mt. Union might not be able to do this as well as Bowling Green. Bowling Green is a little bigger school, they have a larger athletic program, and a little better athletic program. They would probably be able to take me more places if I was good enough.

“There’s a little tougher competition in the Mid-American Conference than the All-Ohio Conference. Mt. Union is very small. It’s about two blocks by two blocks for the whole campus. So I finally decided on Bowling Green after visiting Bowling Green and meeting Sid Sink.

“I wanted to run with him. He was an All-American and I admired him for what he had accomplished. I heard that Coach Brodt was a good coach. The school was a nice size for me. It wasn’t too large and it wasn’t too small. I thought it was a pretty campus, so I decided to come to Bowling Green.”

# FRACTURED DREAMS

Dave came to Bowling Green to prove himself, to make a name for himself and with the goal in mind of being the best runner BG ever had. He admired others who were ahead of him at the moment, but he had no idols.

"I can honestly say I don't think I ever had any idols in track," he says. "I looked up to Jim Ryun and respected him a lot in the sense that, 'Wow he's good runner', but not in the sense that, 'Boy I want to model my life after him'. I respected him. I thought he had good times, but I didn't really pattern my life after anybody.

"I wanted to run for myself and I didn't really want to respect anybody that much, where I wanted to live my life as they lived their lives. I wanted to live my own life."

Wottle came out of high school high on potential and low on conditioning—a "raw" prospect who had learned as much as he could and succeeded on talent and competitiveness. Dave found this out rather quickly when he began his first season of cross-country at Bowling Green in 1968.

"I remember the first workout I ever ran in college was the 20 quarters in about 73 pace the first day of cross-country workouts. I came back in what I thought was pretty good shape. I was 'gung-ho' for it and I started workouts in August following coach Brodt's workout sheet that he sent us. I didn't follow it real well, but I followed it and I was in pretty good shape because I was able to hold up for those quarters.

"I was really sick as a dog, though, that first week. I think everybody else was too. But I wasn't used to putting in that much mileage in a week. It was at least double what I was doing in high school."

That first quarter workout also taught Wottle another lesson on what he should expect for the next four years.

"I walked out and it was raining and I said, 'Oh boy, he's going to call off workouts because it's raining'. That's what we always did in high school, but not Coach Brodt. We went out there and we ran anyway."

As the commercial slogan goes, "I hate it, but I use it twice a day." That was what it was like for Dave his freshman year.

"I'm glad I ran it (cross-country), but I wasn't really thinking that when I ran it freshman year. I think it really added to my strength. I hate workouts as they are, and cross-country workouts are a lot rougher for me than track workouts because I'm not used to running that long of a distance."

Along with the increase in distance, Wottle had another adjustment to make. He had to learn how to accept defeat and make constructive use of his losses rather than lose confidence in his ability.

"It was kind of hard for me because I was used to winning," says Wottle, "but I always kept it in the back of my mind that I could beat Sid (Sink) someday and that I would just have to be beaten by him now while he

was better, more mature and stronger than I was. Someday I would be able to beat him. I wasn't sure my freshman year of ever being as great as he was. I had almost given up hope of being called the best from Bowling Green because Sid had done so much.

"I was able to adapt to losing to Sid. I didn't particularly like to run against him that much my freshman year because I knew that he was stronger than me and that more than likely he could beat me. I didn't particularly like to be beaten, so I tried to stay away from him and Coach Brodt kept us apart most of the time.

"But I think the biggest thing that got me going toward my sophomore year and really made me strive toward my sophomore year was the fact that Sid was beating me. I wanted to beat Sid and I wanted to do it consistently. I wanted him to get out of my region, which I call the half-mile/mile region, and get up there and dominate his own region. I wanted him to leave my region alone. I think that's why I practiced hard over the summer getting ready for cross-country for my sophomore year."

One more year's strength and maturity brought Wottle some rewards: 30th in the NCAA cross-country championship and 32nd in the AAU.

"I was hoping that I would be able to be an All-American in cross-country my sophomore year," says Wottle. "But I just didn't have the strength to run the distance. But I think it (cross-country training) really did help me later on in the track season when my strength really showed."

With a fourth in the indoor NCAA meet and a strong second to Marty Liquori in the outdoor NCAA championships plus a sub-four-minute mile, Wottle was heralded as a star of the future. But Dave's fourth-place finish in the indoor nationals was for him a disappointment.

"That was very disappointing because I thought they took the top four for All-American honors and I really wanted to be an All-American indoors. I finished and I was really happy. I thought, 'This is it. I finally am an All-American.' I looked up at the coach and I asked him how many were All-American. He held up three fingers and I was really disheartened."

But he more than made up for that by making All-American outdoors and with the highlight, at this point of his career, being his first sub-four-minute mile.

"It was one of or very close to being the greatest feeling in my track career," says Wottle of the 3:59 mile. "I can remember driving home and I was just in a daze. I just couldn't believe it. For at least a week afterwards I was still elated over having finally broken the four minutes."

His first taste of success brought the normal cockiness, but an eighth place finish at the AAU and a humbling experience at the World Student Games brought him down to earth.

"I don't think the success fazed me that much because Sid was still number one. Whenever I would start to get a little headstrong, I would realize that Sid was still number one and I still hadn't reached my goal of being the best Bowling Green ever had. But I have to admit I was a little headstrong. I thought, 'I'm a sub-four-minute miler. I can whip the pants off just about anybody.' But I found out that just wasn't true."

After the AAU mistake of trying to kick with the field after a week of inadequate preparation and a blunder in Italy, Dave was back down to earth.

(In Italy, Wottle slowed up in his qualifying heat and looked to his outside to see if anyone was close. He was passed on the inside and didn't qualify for the final.)

"I was really high coming into my junior year of cross country," he says. "After a successful track season, I thought I could really do well in cross-country, really build a good base. Even if I didn't do that well, I'd know I'd have a good base for the track season."

These dreams came to an abrupt end when a week before the Mid-American Conference meet Dave felt a pain down near his ankle. It came on right after he'd completed a 20 quarters on the golf course and then a mile. The injury was diagnosed as a stress fracture.

For nine months, try as he might, Dave couldn't run. During this time a lot of things happened, the best of all being that he met his wife-to-be, Jan Pressler.

"The biggest thing I lost during this time was my faith," says Wottle. "I couldn't rationalize with myself why God let this keep happening to me. I kept having injury after injury and I would keep praying, let me be healed or help me along.

"Jan was a big help in getting me through this crisis. I don't think I could have really done it without Jan. It also helped me mature quite a bit—to look at myself a little more and reflect on what track means to me, whether I would want to try and get back in shape or if I would just want to give it up. But I think I decided in my own mind, and with Jan's help, that I should really stick with it and try for track again. Track was really ingrained in me at this time, and even though I did hate the workouts, hated getting back into shape, I love the competition. I love to compete and it's something I do best. I think that everybody should try to do the thing that they do best and track's what I do best so I thought I'd stick with it."



# MUNICH AND BEYOND

On July 1, 1971, after two weeks of training and two speed workouts (eight 220's and six 440's), Wottle stepped on the track for his first race in nine months.

"The feeling of being in that race was something—just to be on that track. I can remember going around the first turn and I was right on somebody's shoulder. I can remember coming down the backstretch. Man, I just started smiling, it felt so great just to be competing again."

He finished second in the 800-meter race in 1:52.3. When he tried to kick with 200 to go, he tied up and the minor signs of his nine-month layoff showed. But the feeling of being back in competition and running again was more than enough to spur Wottle on for the coming season.

He started training in mid-June and continued all the way through the Olympics 14 months later without a significant break. One of the biggest encouragements during this time was his 1971 cross-country season. He lost only three races all year, and there were no significant injuries to slow his progress.

"I was really pleased with my cross-country season. It was a real boost for me to know that I can come off nine months of injury and I still had everything, I still felt good. I was having no problems with my legs besides just a little bit of tendinitis in my left knee, but it went away. Eventually it would crop up again right before the Olympics. It would be the one that would flare up and almost eliminate me from going to the Olympics. I rested it two days during cross-country and it went away."

At this time, Wottle was just glad to be running again, and the Olympics were far away in his thoughts and plans. But after a successful indoor campaign he began to have his first thoughts of an Olympic berth.

"I wasn't thinking of the Olympics wholeheartedly yet. There was something in the back of my mind that was saying, 'Maybe you could make the Olympics. Maybe you've got a chance!' But then I would think about it a little while and I'd think there's a lot of runners better than me. Liquori was out, but just gobs of runners were still better than me timewise. If not better, real close. I couldn't really think that I had a real good chance of getting a spot on the team.

"I was not thinking of the 800 meters at all. I was thinking of the 1500 meters and I thought that (Jim) Ryun and (Tom) Von Ruden had one-two sewn-up and that the third spot was the only one open, with (Bob) Wheeler, (Howell) Michael, (Jerome) Howe, and those guys, competing for that one spot. Would I still have a chance? I still wasn't sure at this time."

A successful outdoor campaign brought some increased confidence and a reassessment of the options open at the Olympic Trials.

"Outdoor season I was really pleased. I started really coming on.

I started feeling really strong, especially near the end. Right before the 800 meters in the AAU was when I was thinking that I would run the 800, thinking that I could run the 800 in the Olympic Trials for speed workouts, and that would be it, because I had enough base, I had enough strength so that I could run three races in the Olympic Trials in the 800 meters and still come back the next week and be just as strong in the 1500 meters.

“When I got to the Olympic Trials, I was scared. I was just starting to be noticed. I wasn’t really considered a big threat. I really wasn’t known then. I wasn’t a national figure and it was really something for me to be there with all these other name runners—to see Jim Ryun in person, to work out on that track, getting psyched up. When I did run the races in front of a crowd like Eugene’s, it was just unbelievable. I really enjoyed it.”

“In the 800 meters at the Olympic Trials, the pressure was unbelievable,” Dave adds. “I never felt so much pressure as I did then because this was the big one. I wanted to qualify in the 800 meters because if I didn’t I’d have a lot of pressure on myself to make it in the 1500 meters, and I really wanted to make it to the Olympics.”

When he won the 800 meters in world record-tying time, it was a new high for him.

“That was the biggest moment in my track career. I thought after I broke the four-minute mile that nothing would ever come near it. I think it was even bigger than winning the Olympics. I say that mostly because I was feeling good, everything in that race was just right. The race went just right, I was on Ryun’s shoulder, I outkicked Jim Ryun down the straightaway and tied the world record.

After the 800 meters, with the pressure of making the team now off, Wottle went down the Pacific coast with former teammate Paul Talkington for a day and then prepared for the 1500. In the process, he injured his back and the usual Wottle kick was not present though he powered down the straightaway in second to earn a position in the 1500 meters for Munich.

Six days later, July 15, 1972, he was married to Jan Pressler. They had a short three-day honeymoon at Salt Fork Lake Park and then headed for Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine, for the US Olympic team training camp.

“The first day I was there I didn’t warm-up properly like I was used to at BG,” says Dave. “I went out and ran a hard workout, four 440’s in under 60, around 58, then three 660’s, brisk and easy. And that was hard for me because I had run maybe twice in the preceding 10 days. I was out of shape and I think I was trying to get back in shape fast, and also trying to impress (Olympic Coach Bill) Bowerman, to show him that just because I was married I could do just as well even though I was bringing my wife along.”

On the warmdown, about a quarter-mile out, he felt some pain in his left knee. It was diagnosed as tendinitis and the rest is history. Down to seven, 14 and 21 miles from his previous average of 85 miles a week, Wottle’s morale took a big dip.

“You read in the paper that Wottle was over there honeymooning and I was,” says Dave. “That was all I could do. Jan and I did quite a bit together, and we had a good time. I used it as our honeymoon. I couldn’t do

anything else. There wasn't any reason for me to sit around in my room and mope that I was injured when there was nothing I could do about it. I might as well get out and get my mind off it, and that is how I think Jan helped me the most. She kept my mind off it. She kept saying, 'Oh, don't worry about it. You'll be back. You'll be able to do well in the Olympics.' "

By the time the team got to Norway, Wottle was starting to come back a little. He ran three 800-meter races—two in Norway and one in Stockholm—taking two seconds to Rick Wohlhuter and winning the last against mainly high school runners "to get my confidence back." When he arrived in Munich, he ran a 5000-meter race for strength and joined BG coach Mel Brodt for the final preparation.

"A big inspiration in Munich, besides having Jan there, was having Coach Brodt there. I felt a lot more confident in letting him write out my workouts, see what condition I was in. I felt a little bit better physically. I could go about four miles at one clip without my knee hurting me, and that was quite a bit. Thirty-five miles a week was what I was averaging two weeks before the Olympics started."

A sore knee, low on conditioning, low in confidence, Wottle's competitive nature was never more evident as he went 1:47.6 and 1:48.7 to qualify for the final.

"I was really nervous when I walked out there (for the 800-meter final). I mean you can't help but be nervous when you walk out in front of 80,000 people. I felt like I felt at the high school state meet my senior year. I remember I got so nervous I was really weak. My legs felt like they were going to collapse and I was saying to myself, 'I'm not even going to run this race. I feel so weak I just want to go inside the locker room and sit down.' I felt weak and exhausted—not exhausted; it's just nervous tension. I really felt weak.

"Added to that, I had the idea that I wasn't in as good a shape as everybody else. It was in my mind that I'd lost those three weeks of workouts and I was injured. I'd lost my base. I'd lost my speed. 'I'm not on par with these other runners. How am I going to do?'

"The first 200 meters, I was so far behind. I think it was a little bit from the nervous tension, but it was a little bit from the fact I just felt like crap. I was trying to catch up with them, and I was really trying as hard as I could. I was straining all the way up until a 350, 320 to go when I finally caught up to the pack. Then I could finally relax, but before I was just straining to catch up with them.

"When I finally caught up, I relaxed down the backstretch and then I felt, 'Well, this is it. I have to go now or never.' So I just reached down and started kicking as hard as I could and I just started passing them. About five yards from the finish line I thought, 'Well, maybe I've got a chance for (Yevgeniy) Arzhanov.' So I just kept running through the line and leaned. I sensed that I had beaten him, probably because I sensed that nobody was beside me because he (Arzhanov) had fallen down."

"I wasn't hyper-psyched up," says Wottle of the race. "It meant a lot to me, but it didn't get me as excited as when I won the Olympic Trials. I was really exhausted after the race. I wasn't in as good a shape as at the Olympic Trials. It was so close that I didn't feel like I had really won the

race. I won the race and I knew I had, but I just didn't feel like I had because it was so close. I didn't feel as good as I usually do coming down the straightaway. I didn't feel as powerful. It didn't excite me as much."

The excitement of the moment did one thing, though. It made him forget his hat. A newcomer to anthem ceremonies, Wottle was unaware of the worn cap that he had become attached to over the past year. The result was for him embarrassing and, for the people watching, one of the truly human moments of the 20th Olympiad.

Wottle's victory was one of the few bright moments for the United States at an otherwise troubled Olympic Games. A week later, however, Wottle made a mistake that cost him a chance for further glory.

"I waited too long for my kick," says Dave of his millisecond loss of a qualifying spot for the 1500-meter final. "It was mostly because of overconfidence in my kick from the week before. I felt that I could give those guys a little 15-yard lead with 150 to go and still kick them. I was just getting cocky over my kick and I didn't make it. That more or less brought me down to earth a little bit.

"I was very sad afterwards and I still get really ticked off at myself when I think that I missed it by so little. I don't know if I could have done anything in the final but just to say that I was in the final of the 1500-meters would have meant a lot to me."

After the Olympics, Dave took advantage of the opportunities available to a gold medalist with races in Malmo, Helsinki and London, then went home for banquets, parades and a two-month rest from running.

He began student teaching, which took up most of the time he didn't spend meeting the "obligations" of an Olympic champion. He began running again in November. His knee bothered him again for the first week, but the pain went away soon after that.

His first competition was in New York for the Knights of Columbus 1000-yard run. He wasn't prepared for a fast race because Bowling Green has no indoor facility and most of the team's speed work is achieved through early season races. So the result of the first post-Olympic race was less than spectacular.

"I wasn't in real good shape," says Wottle. "I got blown off the track (fifth in a five-man field). The next weekend, I came back and beat (Kip) Keino in Los Angeles, which was a very big victory for me because it more or less got me back on the track of winning again, of competing again and winning when I competed. The competitiveness, which I wasn't able to show in New York because I just didn't have the conditioning to compete with that type of runners, was back."

Wottle would lose no more indoors until the NCAA meet in March.

"We thought we'd give it a try to win it (the team title) and it all backfired on us," says Dave of the NCAA indoor meet. "We gave it an honest effort. I readily agreed to run the mile/two-mile double, but I really wasn't sure I could do it because I really didn't think I had the strength. I didn't run cross-country in the fall and I didn't have that background to give me the strength to do it. I got sixth place in the two-mile and I was able to win the mile.

"It was rather lucky for me. I didn't get any breaks in the mile itself

but I had just enough strength after running the mile heat and two-mile on Friday to win the mile. It really helped me quite a bit. It would have really demoralized me if I wouldn't have been able to win the mile or at least run a really good second with a real honest effort."

After the NCAA, there was a rest over spring break and preparation for the relay season when school resumed in late March.

"I was really psyched for the relay season. I was really high for it because I knew we had a real good team, and during the season we proved ourselves. I was really demoralized when Villanova whipped us (in the four-mile relay) as they did at Penn Relays. I don't think they could beat us if we ran when we were both fresh. We had just won Drake in the new American record of 16:19.6 and we were really high, but we were also really tired from the plane ride and everything Friday night. We just couldn't hold up on it."

After the relays it was dual meets, conference meets, a second to Ken Popejoy at the Vons meet in L.A. and a half-mile win at the USTFF championships, then the NCAA at Baton Rouge.

"That was so hot (at the NCAA) it was unbelievable. It was humid and about 95, 98 degrees down on that track. I didn't wear any sweats to warmup in. I just wore a T-shirt. You really shouldn't wear much because you end up getting heat exhaustion like a lot of guys did. The race itself felt okay, but afterward I had a really hard time recuperating. I was really pleased with that victory because a lot of people thought that I wouldn't be able to win it. I thought that I would."

The AAU in Bakersfield the next weekend was a different story. Wottle felt he wasn't ready for a class 880-yard race because he hadn't done the work necessary to prepare himself for it.

"It wasn't a big setback because I went into it half-heartedly," Dave says of the second in the AAU 880. "I didn't really think I had the ability or the background to beat Wohlhuter in the 880. I'd run the USTFF two weeks before and I didn't feel good. I didn't feel strong like I did in the Olympic Trials. So I wasn't that discouraged when I lost. I don't believe I have the speed in the 800 meters. I'm more confident in the mile."

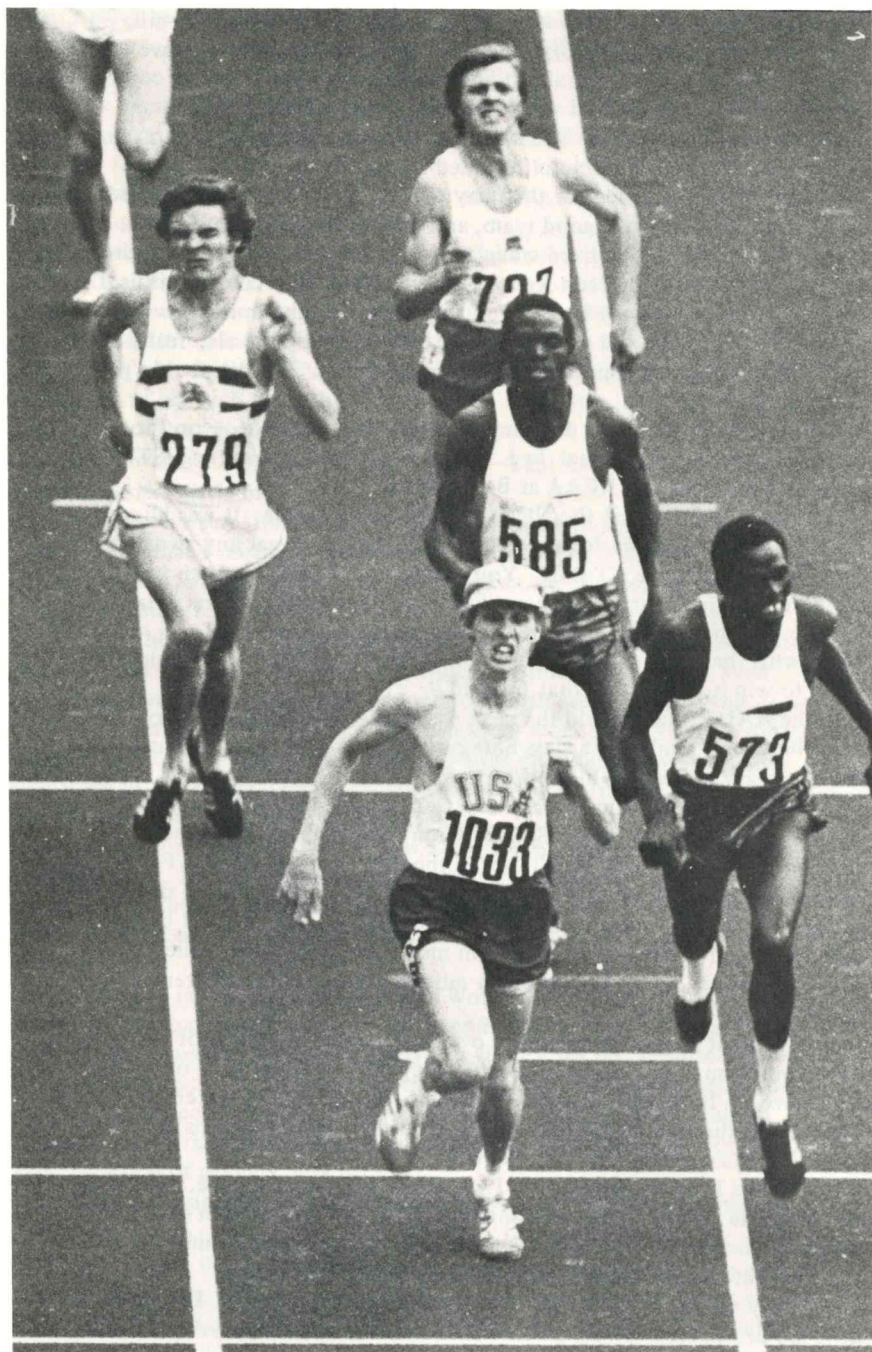
Then it was off to Europe and a month of racing in a different environment.

"I think it's really good to run over in Europe. I think a lot of Americans should run over in Europe because they get the experience of running fast. I love it. It doesn't faze me that much. In fact, I feel better than when I come through in the 3:01, 3:02, 3:03 pace (for three laps) we usually get for "fast-paced" races in the US.

"Maybe I felt better because I was at my peak at that time, but I really like it because you're almost guaranteed a good race if you're in shape. If you come through in 2:56, you're not going to run over four, and you always have the chance if you feel good to hit the world record."

"They tell us 'Come to our meet, it'll be an easy race,'" Dave says of European promoters. "Well, an easy race over there is 4:03. I don't think I ever ran over 4:05 or 4:04 equivalent in the mile in all those 'easy' races."

In all, he ran 13 races in 33 days in Europe and he won 10 of them. The losses were usually at the end of a string of races. There were also the hassles with transportation and mixed-up reservations.



The Olympic final: Wottle wins by the narrowest of margins from Arzhanov (right) and Boit (573). (Mark Shearman)

A mix-up in plane reservations forced Wottle and Steve Prefontaine to buy their own tickets from Norway to Munich for the US-USSR dual meet. They were later reimbursed by the AAU, but a ride from the airport to the living quarters in Munich didn't appear, even though both had called ahead and asked for someone to meet their plane.

In Italy, Wottle was forced to take a taxi to Turin the day of his 1500-meter race, and the general trouble he encountered with the AAU group almost made him pull out of the Russian meet. He agreed to run only on the principle that he owed it to the team, but he was generally unimpressed by the organization of the touring group.

Another problem was the newspaper story that circulated about his supposed commitment to run in the British AAA championships.

"The guy came up to me after the Helsinki race and asked me if I was interested in running the race and I said, yes, I was interested but I wasn't sure—that I might have another race lined up then and to get in touch with me again. I never heard from the guy again. It wasn't until a British newspaper man called me up when I was in my room in Munich and said, 'What do you think about this story we have in our paper?' I said 'What story?' He said that I'd told them (British AAA) that I'd come and then I'd backed out. I told him that was just a bunch of bull and that I'd like to get hold of the guy who contacted me in Helsinki. It was just a bunch of lies.

"I never committed myself. If I had committed myself I would have gone, but I never did. I may have told him (the reporter who called) I'd never run in England again, but if I did it was when I was really mad. I hope to run more races in England."

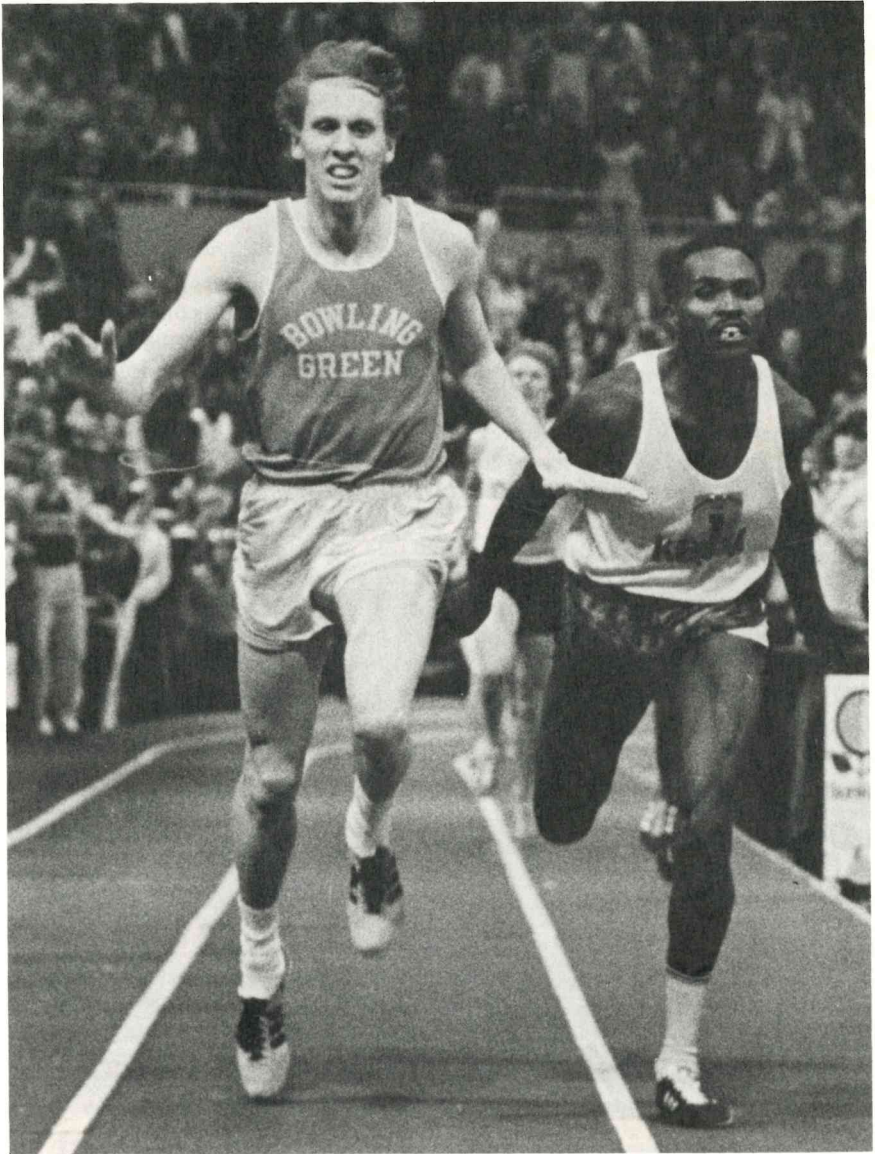
After Europe it was home to a race he told a friend of his he'd run in Rochester, N.Y. He had to struggle to fight off the challenge of Dick Buerkle and Barry Brown in a 4:00.6 mile and he figured it was time for a rest and to ponder the decision of whether or not to turn pro.

"I don't know what to do at the present moment," Dave said in late 1973, "whether to continue on or to get the money now and hang it up. When I do turn pro it will be when I have no more ambitions in amateur track, when I'm ready to quit."

Whatever his decision, the Dave Wottle story will live on, for he has already left his mark in track history with his hat and his kick.

## Chapter II

# A COMPETITOR



A post-Olympic indoor mile win over Kip Keino. (Donald Duke)



# LESSONS SINKING IN

In May 1968, I saw Dave Wottle for the first time as he won the Ohio state high school mile run in 4:20.2. I wasn't terribly impressed—probably because I was worried about my own race less than an hour away and partly because of the way he looked and how he won.

A crop of windblown, wheat-colored hair, puffed-up and combed back gave him the “hick town” image. His mile victory looked more like luck than dominance. Another Dave, Dave Udovic, the favorite in the race, came on strong right near the end and almost passed Wottle at the tape. To the unprofessional eye of one of his peers, the victory looked lucky.

So when Wottle's name appeared on the roster for Bowling Green State University the next year, I didn't remember he was the state mile champion. It wasn't until after the first time-trial, a two-mile cross-country run, that I made the connection between the state meet and Dave Wottle. As he stood there grinning and accepting congratulations on his effort, I thought back to the day in May and began to reassess my opinion of the skinny-legged kid from Canton Lincoln High School.

From his first cross-country race ever, a 2.8-mile race as a freshman in college, Dave exhibited the qualities of competitiveness and a huge desire to excel. Although he was shy and withdrawn, some of the emotions he felt came close to the surface during the first year.

A genuine loathing of workouts was the most evident fact of Dave's adjustment to college athletics. Twice-a-day workouts were foreign to him, and the mileage was double that of his most ambitious high school days. He complained no more than his teammates, even though the pain he was going through was etched on his face. He wanted to win badly, and would do whatever work was necessary to achieve his goal, “to be the best Bowling Green ever had.”

That in itself was a tough order. Not that Bowling Green had a long string of notable track performers, but Bernie Casey was no slouch. Casey, who is better known for his football exploits, just missed making the Olympic team in 1960 in the 110-meter hurdles. However, the biggest talent at Bowling Green was present at the time Dave checked in—Sid Sink.

An energetic, talented and successful athlete, Sid was Dave's biggest challenge and his biggest booster. Sink was a team man and he realized for the team to win everyone on it had to perform to maximum capacity. He drove himself toward this goal and inspired others to do the same.

One of those he inspired was Wottle. Dave knew that Sid would be his biggest challenge, and he also knew that he wasn't quite in Sid's league during his freshman year. It took a mature individual to adjust to losing consistently to someone he felt he could beat.

Dave had to acknowledge the fact that he was not strong enough yet

to handle someone with Sid's strength and maturity. It was not such a hard task in cross-country because Dave never considered it his strong sport. But when Sid began beating him in the mile, that was a different story.

The mile was "his race." Wottle considered it his property. And to have someone with inferior speed, who never claimed to be a miler, beat him regularly was a blow to his ego. It didn't destroy his confidence, though, and that was the important thing. Sid would playfully taunt Wottle about his inability to beat him or match his times. But at the same time he would encourage Dave to improve.

In the end, the real lesson Dave learned was that speed, natural ability and potential are nice to have, but they won't help you unless you develop them. From Sid, Dave learned the importance of hard work and the strength that comes with it. It was a valuable lesson and it forced Dave to search inside himself, find his strengths and weaknesses and work to improve on them.

"When the alarm goes off at 6:30, it's difficult for me to convince myself that I have to run," says Wottle. "I'll say, 'I'll still be good even if I miss the morning runs.' So I really have to push myself to do them."

He had to push himself, do things he never did before, run more miles than ever before, dedicate himself to the achievement of this goal, to be the best.

Running cross-country was one of the things that didn't excite Dave. It is safe to say he didn't look forward to the first season or look back on it later with fond memories, just with a sense of satisfaction that he was able to adjust as well as he did.

"His first venture in cross-country was very distasteful," says Coach Mel Brodt, "as he had no background in the sport and had only run a couple of two-mile races in high school."

For the most part, Wottle's races showed his lack of strength. Yet he was named the outstanding frosh. Wottle enjoyed the trips and the team camaraderie more than the grind of the cross-country season.

He learned to appreciate the value of all those miles when the track season started, because he could feel the strength it added. The early season was not too productive as he spent most of it getting back into shape after laying off from November to January.

A 4:40 mile and 2:28 1000 started off his year with victories in the squad's time-trial at the Bowling Green "indoor facility," the men's gym. The men's gym had a cork-board balcony with banked turns. It was later abandoned because too many injuries resulted from the sharp turns on the 120-yard track.

Even after it was abandoned as a running track, the gym was still used for "circuit training." This was a calisthenics-weight lifting exercise that the team went through before each workout during the early indoor season of Dave's freshman year.

Coach Brodt gave everyone 15 minutes to do as many circuits as time allowed. Then it was either up to the balcony or outside for the workout. During Dave's freshman year, an indoor interval-type workout was used until the weather cleared enough outside to conduct snowless workouts in the streets, on grass or on the track.

Brodt's system was based on "effort" and a terminology of efforts was introduced to the runners. "Jog" was the base and it usually varied depending on who led. It was supposed to be a relaxed effort where one shook out any kinks and recovered from the preceding effort. "Easy" was the next step up and it was defined as better than a good jog.

Then came "brisk", the emphasis here being on knee lift and form rather than speed. Next was "good," which was half-speed. Next came "very good," about race pace or better, followed by "hard" and "all-out"—three-quarter and full speed under control.

This system left the speed at a level where the athletes controlled it and it promoted a competitive-type workout with each member of the group together in the pack. The coach guided the tempo of the workout by assigning leaders.

It was in this capacity, as a leader, that Sid and later Dave made the greatest contribution to the program at Bowling Green. The leader would have to buck the wind (which in Bowling Green is an almost daily fact of life) and grind out the pace that the coach said should be run. Brodt did not plan the system this way. It just worked out that the strongest runner led most of the workouts.

Most of the emphasis was on the ability to accelerate during all stages of a race with the normal timed interval runs being broken up by "effort" runs. For example, after a set of 10 quarters, a half would be run, split up into 110's of varying efforts.

A favorite phrase used by the coach was a reference to when the "real" race starts. He would refer to the first three-quarters of a race as just a preliminary action and always pointed to the last quarter of the race as "the race." His training was geared toward this, and Wottle is probably his best example of how to run that last portion.

But as the coach also noted, "You have to be there before you can do anything." This was, and still is, Wottle's main weakness—his tendency to lag too far behind. Whether it is from lack of strength or from a momentary mental lapse, Dave has always been subject to this tendency.

His freshman year it was mostly due to his lack of strength. As the season wore on he stayed with the pace longer, and as a result his times dipped. He began with 4:24, then ran 4:15, 4:11.9 and finally 4:06.8. His performances didn't impress him too much as he noted in a letter describing the results of his two big meets that year:

"In answer to your questions, I ran a 4:09.7 in the USTFF meet and placed seventh. In the NCAA prelims, I ran a 4:09 and placed sixth in a heat of 10. There were 29 contestants in the mile all together. I did get to run in the same heat as Ryun, but he chewed me up."

As the outstanding freshman for 1969 on Bowling Green's team, not many people "chewed him up." But he did absorb enough "shocks" to know he would have to work harder the next year to get to the top. So that summer, instead of the usual lay-off, he began running in August with a series of YMCA races to get in shape for the long grind in cross-country.

"This weekend I'm going to start running in the seven-mile races in order to get used to the longer distances," he wrote in a letter during the summer. "Right now I am feeling pretty bad (in my guts) when I'm

running. But I hope I'll get used to it as I get back into shape. I hope to start on double workouts."

The letter was encouraging, but Dave didn't stick to his word of trying two-a-day practices. He returned to Bowling Green in better shape than the year before, but not quite ready for the early-season conditioning program. As a result, the early meets were once again "testing races," with a hilly six-mile at the University of Pittsburg doing him in.

He went through the first mile in 4:56 in that race, came through three in 15:52 and ended up a tired eighth in 33:02. His strength began building after that race. Then at a four-way meet at the University of Michigan he ran stride for stride with Sid Sink for the first time. They finished in a dead heat 25:33 for five miles over a mildly hilly course.

The culmination of the cross-country season was an upset team victory in the MAC meet, as Wottle achieved his goal of placing in the top five. His fifth place helped the team to a one-point win and brought on a wild celebration in the small farm town of Bowling Green.

It was the team's first-ever cross-country championship and the celebrating led to a dunking in the steeplechase pit for Coach Brodt and other team members. Then it was inside to the showers add earsplitting chants in the shower stalls of "We're number one."

Added to this were Wottle's 30th place in the NCAA and a 32nd in the AAU championships for a personally satisfying season.

All this earned him the award for most improved at Bowling Green. For all but the Pitt meet, he was either first or second man, tying with Sink once and taking first on the team at the AAU. The only thing he lost during the year was his "old faithful" pair of black and white Adidas 9.9s that he had worn since high school. When a hole in the bottom started leaking he thought it was time of a new pair of shoes.

# WOTTLE'S RISE AND FALL

After cross-country, Dave took his normal rest between seasons and came back short on conditioning. It showed in his first race of the season—4:20 anchor leg on the distance medley relay. The tiredness and disappointment were evident as he sat on the inside of the track watching the other races. Dave Wottle does not like losing and you could almost hear him vow that next week things would be different. Next week they were different.

One of Dave's more remarkable qualities is his ability to prepare himself for a maximum effort in a short time. Contrary to the previous week, when the team was out of the running as Dave got the baton, they were close to the lead when he got it at the Pitt meet.

Some football players are said to be able to "smell the goal line." Dave has always had an ability to "smell the finish line." He chased and caught the leaders with a 59.4 first quarter, exploded past everyone with a 60.2 final quarter, to win the distance medley. His mile was 4:10.9.

From then on, the Wottle kick became his trademark. Opponents were wary of it and his teammates came to expect it. But he still lacked one thing: the ability to get out quickly from the starting line. But he was learning, gaining strength and experience with each race. Soon the results of his efforts would bear fruit.

The fruit came as a result of his efforts on the Bowling Green four-mile relay squad during the 1970 relay season. It all started with a 4:05.4 anchor leg at the Ohio University Relays.

On a sunny day at Kansas' new Tartan track, a "honey-haired" kid from Canton, Ohio led three hatted compatriots to a stunning come-from-behind victory. On April 17, 1970, Dave Wottle put Bowling Green "on the map" as a track power of the Midwest and a distance power in the nation.

During the 13-hour drive to Kansas on Thursday, a stiff group of Ohioans devised a "gimmick" that would later bring attention to one of the four. Ironically, he was the only one of the four who didn't use it that day in Lawrence. Dave Wottle was the only member who didn't wear a hat.

The hat idea really must be credited to Sid Sink, who expanded on the idea of using Coach Brodt's white stocking caps for visibility in the pack at cross-country races. Sid figured that without hats they were just like any other team. There were no national figures at Bowling Green to draw attention, so Sink figured a way to make them stick out in the crowd.

They'd worn hats during practice as sort of a carry-over from the stocking caps in cross-country, so why not in the race? Sid brought an old battered blue golf cap, Rich Breeze, a black beret and Steve Danforth, his old high school stocking cap. But for Wottle, who still had his hair combed

back in a style that looked like locks of wind-blown wheat, a hat was more of a bother than it was worth.

When the three hats turned the baton over to the hatless one for the final leg, things looked dim. Doug Smith of Kansas had a 50-yard lead and he held it until the last lap. Then Wottle "turned on the jets" with a 56 final quarter, eating up all 50 of those yards and added some more in a thrilling last-lap surge.

Needless to say, this left an impression on the members of the media. The headlines the next day told of the men with the hats and the "honey-colored" hair of the kid with the kick that defied belief. But Wottle and the "men with the hats" were not done yet. The Drake Relays were the only obstacle left for their unique triple crown.

By now an almost cocky attitude had spread over the team. They felt all they had to do was give Wottle the baton close to the leaders and the race was won. At Drake Dave once again proved them right.

After catching the pack with a 58.2 first quarter, Dave readied himself for his final surge with a 30.7 first 220 on the last lap. Then he broke loose. His 25.4 left the field looking at his heels, and his 4:02 anchor leg gave BG a 16:26.4—the fastest time in the country that year.

Bowling Green was now recognized as a middle-distance power, and the country began to take note of the motley-looking group with the "super-kick" anchorman. If they had only been watching a few weeks earlier, they might have anticipated some of what was to come.

What might have been a tragic accident turned out to be a real indication of the competitive nature of Bowling Green's new star. While leading off the distance medley relay at the Kentucky Relays, Wottle was attempting to move up on the leader's shoulder with about 330 left in his half-mile leg. As he did, a discus came caroming off the infield and struck him just above the left knee. He hobbled down the backstretch and fell back to about sixth place, then a strange thing happened. Almost as if he was healed by a magic wand, Dave began accelerating. The limp gone, he was making up ground on the leaders. He handed off the baton in second, a few yards behind the leader with a time of 1:53.9.

As he bent over from the pain, with tears in his eyes, wishing it would go away, it was not hard for the observer to know that they saw something special on the track that day.

It was Dave's year for bruises and falls in 1970. The week after Drake, he was tripped in the mile in a five-way meet at Bowling Green. It didn't faze him much, however, as he got up and won anyway in 4:13.9. At the MAC meet, it wasn't Wottle who fell but one of the other runners who tripped on Dave's heel on the homestretch during the mile.

Through it all, he kept winning: an 8:58.8 two-mile win over Sink and Canadian Dave Ellis (57.8 last lap); a 4:07.2, 1:55 mile-880 double at the MAC, and a 4:04.1, 1:50.7 double at the All-Ohio. None of this matched the excitement that came on June 6, a day Wottle will not forget for the rest of his life.

Indiana University was the site, the Central Collegiate Conference meet was the occasion, and a sub-four-minute mile was the goal. The day was hot and so was the pace as Lee LaBadie pulled Wottle, Garry Bjorkland and Hector

Ortiz through splits of 58.8, 60.3 and 62.1. Then LaBadie lost the lead to a streaking Ortiz, who had dreams of four minutes himself. Wottle was flying right behind and it was a neck-and-neck battle until the top of the homestretch.

One quick burst and 110 yards later it was over. The scoreboard clock read 3:58.8. A huge grin broke over Dave's face, he put his arm around Ortiz and they swaggered arm in arm, smiles stretched across their faces. The official time was 3:59.0.

Even more remarkable than Wottle's four-minute mile was his follow-up 1:51.6 half-mile less than an hour later. That he was able to pull himself back together and run so well in another race speaks highly of the competitive nature of the man who did it. The man who beat him, Rick Wohlhuter, would crop up later in Dave's career.

To further his reputation and establish himself as not just another flash in the pan, Wottle used his kick to beat Keith Colburn and Lowell Paul in 1:47.6 at the USTFF championships in Wichita, Kansas. He came back the next day to place fourth in the three-mile in 14 minutes flat.

Then it was the NCAA and Marty Liquori, who hadn't heard about the finishing ability of the pride of Bowling Green. He found out, almost too late, as Wottle's closing rush just fell short of ending Marty's three-year dominance of the NCAA mile.

But Wottle still had a lot to learn, and this was evident the next weekend when he tried to sprint down the field in the AAU meet after a week of less-than-strenuous training in California. That and the fact that this was the end of a long season brought Dave down to earth and made him realize four-minute milers are not such a rare commodity.

The season was not over, however. As a result of his second in the NCAA Dave was invited to compete in the World Student Games in Turin, Italy, in August. Italy was enough to teach him a lesson that Satchel Page used as a motto, "Don't look back because someone might be gaining on you." On the homestretch of his 800-meter heat, Wottle looked to his outside to see if anyone was close enough to challenge him for the last qualifying spot and was unceremoniously passed on the inside, thus learning a valuable lesson.

After that humbling experience, Dave pursued his training for the coming cross-country season with renewed vigor and arrived in the best shape ever for the beginning of the season. He was not in top shape but his strength was improved and the longer distances fazed him less and less.

As a result, Sid and Dave were an inseparable duo for most of the season with the team effort at the Notre Dame Invitational highlighting the season.

Notre Dame, while nationally known for football, also hosts a yearly invitational for the top teams in the Midwest on a flat, fast and slightly short five-mile route. The field is usually strong and the race is an early-season indicator of how a team will do against tough competition.

Nobody was prepared for what became a complete rout by the BG foursome that brought back memories of the "four horseman of Notre Dame." With the group stringing out approaching the three-mile mark there was a murmur of shock and surprise rumbling through the small crowd gathered on the course. "Look at Bowling Green," they exclaimed.

Look indeed, for right behind the front three sat a neat pack of four runners in the orange and white of Bowling Green. Sink, Wottle, Steve Danforth and Tracy Elliott were in a formation that resembled a tight square.

They stayed that way until a mile to go when Jerry Richey was able to get between the duos of Sink and Wottle, and Elliott and Danforth. A 4-5, 7-8 finish (with fifth man, Bob McOmber, in 25th) won the meet handily and caused an open-mouthed admiration for the group running of the BG foursome.

This unity had been a trademark of the team since the opening meet of the season when Sink, Wottle and I came in together, with Elliott a second behind and Danforth four seconds off the pace of the leaders. The only lapse of contact in that meet was when Wottle strayed off course while watching a cheerleader about 550 yards from the finish. He quickly caught himself and got back on the course and the incident provided a good laugh for all but the embarrassed Wottle.

As the season wore on, the grouping became looser and more spread out. I was injured after the first meet and never returned to the front group. The gap between Sink and Wottle, and Danforth and Elliott became a little wider. Then disaster struck.

In the weekly progression of workouts, every other Tuesday is 20-quarter day. On the Tuesday after the All-Ohio meet, the coach decided to add a mile to the end of the quarter workout. During the mile Wottle felt a pain in his right ankle. It wasn't a normal pain. It was something new and it didn't respond to treatment. X-rays showed nothing, and only later was it learned he had suffered a stress fracture.



# THE OLYMPIC BUILD-UP

From Oct. 20, 1970, until June 1971, Wottle couldn't run normally. He tried and the results were the same: pain. It was a frustrating time. After the right ankle healed and Dave was starting to get into condition, the same thing happened in his left fibula—a stress fracture.

Frustrated, angry and itching to be able to compete again, Wottle endured the almost nine months of total abstinence from running. He tried to run the MAC meet but the pain was too much. After a rest and the second injury on March 18, 1971, he decided not to try again until June.

But Wottle didn't lie dormant during this time. He participated as referee in the team's annual freshman-varsity football game. He assisted in meets. And he met his future wife, Jan Pressler.

The football game, while the least important of the three events mentioned, is a respected tradition at Bowling Green.

It is a wonder that the game can be played after the parties the night before, as most team members indulge rather liberally in the "fruit of the vine" in their once-a-season splurge.

The best reason for the festivities is set down by one former runner who said of this year's weekend activities, "I feel compelled to sufficiently inebriate myself the evening before the big game so that the blows my body will have to absorb the next day can be ignored." If Vince Lombardi were alive today and saw some of the action of the field, he would probably recruit some of the talent, even though it runs a little lean by NFL standards.

In a game with no holds barred and no pads to prevent any holes or cracks, the competition is friendly but fierce. Most games are won by the older, more experienced varsity squad but—as was the case in 1970—the freshmen come up with a group of recruits that should have gone out for the football team instead of cross-country. Without Wottle, the varsity lost this contest of "the Titans" by a point, 13-12.

The cross-country team lost in running, too, without Wottle. A third in the MAC, second in the CCC and eighth in the NCAA championships were the results of what had previously been an undefeated season. While he lost a lot of time from training, Dave found something that has been more valuable to him than any of the miles he ever ran—his wife, Jan Pressler.

Jan, who had dated Steve Danforth just prior to meeting Wottle, was a source of inspiration and strength for Dave during this rough period and helped him through the tough decisions he had to make. Whether or not to continue? Was it worth the drudgery and the pain to come back and try again? Would the legs hold up or would he be hurt again in mid-season?

He decided that track was too important in his life at the moment to be given up, and he made his decision to come back. On July 1, 1971, he made his comeback in an 800-meter race in Canada.

On two weeks of training and two speed workouts, Wottle ran 1:52.7. His finish was weak, but considering the nine months of inactivity, the time and his second place were a noteworthy achievement.

Even more noteworthy was his 1971 cross-country season. Undefeated until the final three meets, Wottle was stronger than ever and had only minor problems with the troublesome legs that had laid him up the season before. It wasn't an easy season by any means, but it was his most successful and most encouraging one. It couldn't have come at a better time.

Dave probably would have gone undefeated until the NCAA if the Central Collegiate meet hadn't been held at the Air Force Academy, at 6800 feet elevation. He started slowly because of the altitude and couldn't catch the Air Force's Dennis Sbach. Dave finished second.

The trip to the Academy was worth the problems it presented, though, as the team had its first exposure to altitude running. Clowning around before the meet had always been a BG tradition, but in Colorado it was a whole new experience.

As they arrived in their motel, the runners took note of a small mountain across from their lodgings. The chant came almost in unison: "Let's climb it." Climb it they did, except for a few of the more conservative members who felt it might hurt their performance the next day.

After climbing the mountain, the team went out to look over the course and in 60-degree weather found an unusual sight: little piles of snow. Since boys will be boys, they promptly had a snowball fight in sunny, warm Colorado before returning to their motel to plan the night's festivities.

When dinner was over, the group was always in search of unique entertainment, and Colorado provided greyhound races which kept most of the team amused until it was time for bed or the midnight snack. Through all this, they managed to win the CCC's easily the next day, probably because the other teams were out doing the same thing the night before.

Wottle and the rest of the team enjoyed this "horseplay," as Coach Brodt referred to it. And it helped team unity. It also took much of the pressure off the next day's race rather than letting it build while you sat in a motel room.

The day of the race was when the "psyching" began. One could find Dave and most other team members lying in their beds watching cartoons, wrestling or just relaxing and thinking of the race. The most likely occurrence was a combination of all three.

Once in the team car or bus and on the way to the race, things would calm down. Each runner had his own method of readying himself, and each would search inside himself for the key. There was no "rah-rahing" or pep talks—just encouragement, thought and nervous tension being built up for the upcoming effort. A team huddle right before stripping down was the only group preparation during the pre-race ritual.

Wottle, as well as the other, had his own individualized procedure that he repeated for every meet: jogging until loose, calisthenics, more jogging and finally wind sprints. Prayer and concentration were two unique features of his pre-race preparation, and he liked to be alone during this period.

Once on the track, a somber-faced Wottle is mentally keyed for the task that lies ahead. In 1971, it brought him to 12th in the NCAA and seventh in the USTFF cross-country championships and the BG most valuable

runner award. Most importantly, though, it put him back in the right frame of mind for the upcoming Olympic year.

At that moment, he had only dreams of making the Olympic team. But as the season progressed, those dreams became hopes and the hopes became reality.

As the 1972 indoor season progressed, the dreams that started two years earlier with the first sub-four-minute mile were becoming reality. After the usual early-season period of adjustment, Wottle began to take charge. An early indicator of what was to happen later came at the Cleveland Knights of Columbus meet in February. Dave was pitted against a field that included Yevgeniy Arzhanov of the Soviet Union, the man who was everyone's favorite to win the 800-meter gold medal in Munich that summer.

The race was Wottle's distance, a mile, and it was no contest. With about a quarter of the race gone, Arzhanov faded back and lifted his arms and shook his head in bewilderment as he passed his coach on the top curve. He was never a factor in the race. Frank Murphy and Chris Mason forged the pace, and Wottle sprinted past them on the last lap, an easy winner in 4:06.7.

In a somewhat prophetic scene after the race, Wottle accepted the congratulations of the crowd while over in the middle of the infield a discouraged Arzhanov sat and pondered his defeat. No one could have imagined the same result would come months later in Munich.

By far the best race of the indoor season for Wottle was a two-mile at Eastern Michigan, the week before NCAA. In a battle with Western Michigan's Garry Harris, who would finish second to Sid Sink in the NCAA the next weekend, Dave needed all his strength to take an 8:39.2 win in one of the hardest races of his career.

His face contorted in pain, Wottle clung to Harris like a glove and his final burst was just enough to win. While the mile and half-mile hurt, a two-mile extends the suffering. And from the expression on Dave's face, one could see that he was probably thinking back to his vow in high school never to run another two-mile.

Back in his own "region" the next week, he made a lasting impression on Brian McElroy, among others. McElroy had first competed head-to-head against Wottle at the Millrose Games in New York earlier in the season.

"They brought us out on the track right after the national anthem and they made the announcement that this was the Wannamaker Mile," says Dave. "Then they introduced the athletes. The fans stood up and started cheering. I was really nervous and I looked over at Brian McElroy and asked him, 'How many laps are there in the race?' He gave me a funny look and then broke out laughing."

The Millrose Games had been Dave's first exposure to a big indoor meet, and the awe and confusion had caused a memory lapse. Now, after a number of big meets and a win in the Olympic Invitational 1500 meters, Wottle wasn't the same scared runner he had been in New York. When McElroy felt someone flash past him on the last lap of the NCAA 880, he just about had time to recognize him as the same fellow who didn't quite know what was going on back in February.

"My God, that Wottle sure has some speed!" McElroy told Villanova

coach Jumbo Elliott after the race. He was to learn it again the next day in the distance medley.

A 4:02.7 anchor leg from Wottle brought home the third win for BG that weekend and almost brought the NCAA indoor team championship to little Bowling Green instead of one-point victor Southern California. Dave had looked lethargic during most of his leg, trailing leader Jerome Howe of Kansas State by about four yards most of the way. But with almost a quarter to go, McElroy moved up on his shoulder and Wottle began to kick. He caught Howe and streamed past him on the last lap to break the tape a double winner.

McElroy was not the only one impressed by Wottle's efforts because Dave received an invitation to compete as an alternate on the two-mile relay for the first US-USSR indoor dual meet.

The Russian meet fell on the day before the team was to compete in the first meet of its spring trip—the Piedmont Relays. So Wottle made arrangements to meet the BG team at Furman University. As things developed, Dave didn't even run in the international dual, so he arrived at Furman fresh for an anchor leg on the sprint medley. He got the baton when he was 40 yards behind North Carolina Central's Kenyan Robert Ouko. Nobody thought Dave had a chance at catching Ouko—nobody but Wottle, and he wasn't all that sure himself.

With a lap to go, the gap was still 40 yards. But Wottle began making up ground. To the amazement of all he caught Ouko halfway into the stretch.

"I thought he was just going to pull away from me," said Wottle afterward. "I thought he was just waiting for me to catch him then he was going to take off."

Instead, Wottle took off, his 1:47.7 anchor leg providing a stunning victory. Bedlam broke loose among his teammates. Nobody believed what they had just seen. Coaches' jaws were falling to the ground as Wottle accepted the joyous congratulations, grinning from ear to ear. The 800 meters at the Olympic Trials had loomed as a possible "speed workout" for Dave prior to this time, but now one could see it might be more than that.

At the Kentucky Relays, Dave had an easy time, needing only a 4:18 mile to take the field with his kick. But a new twist was added. Wottle was now wearing a hat. The new hairstyle he had acquired during the summer of 1970 left him with one problem: his hair got in his eyes when he ran. So in the summer of 1971, when he began his comeback from the stress fractures, he began wearing a hat in practice. At Kentucky in 1972, he wore it in competition. The 75-cent white golf cap became an almost permanent fixture from then on.

Suddenly, Wottle's progress hit a snag. April 15-22, he was laid low by a severe throat infection. He spent the first day in the infirmary and didn't work out for a week. His illness caused cancellation of plans to go to the Kansas Relays, and for the first time in his life, he was outkicked down the final straight.

Ken Popejoy of Michigan State was the man who administered the defeat, and Wottle was furious. It takes a little explanation to show why he would be bothered so much about running 4:04.5 after almost two weeks of not working out.

Dave didn't like anyone to beat him at any time, but Popejoy was the last person he wanted to lose to—and to be outkicked by him was even worse. His ego and his confidence were dented.

The reason he disliked losing to Popejoy was characteristic of Dave's behavior at this time in his life. Dave's tendency had always been to avoid getting close to others, particularly those he has to race against. He would build up a mild contempt for them and vow never to be beaten by anyone.

As the years matured him and people like Sink and his other teammates opened him up gradually to the fact that you can compete against someone without building antagonistic psychological devices to enable you to win, Dave began to meet other runners and form friendships. He found that he could compete just as well against those he liked as those he disliked. But at this point he had never gotten to know Popejoy.

Popejoy was a lot like Dave. He wasn't particularly outgoing with other teams' athletes. He had an air about him that gave the impression of a "cocky," determined, single-minded athlete with no time for anything but his race. His face has a spartan glare to it that doesn't invite people to get to know him.

Ken is now Wottle's friend. Dave has learned, through meeting the people he disliked by observation, that they really aren't what he imagined them to be.

But in early 1972, Wottle was still weak from his illness and down mentally from the defeat by Popejoy. Dave suffered through a three-mile of 15:51 in a dual meet the next weekend. Afterwards, he looked like his world had caved in on him.

Jan, then Dave's fiance, came up to Sid and asked him to talk to Dave and cheer him up because he was really down. Whatever he said must have worked because next weekend Wottle ripped off a 54.7 final quarter to nose out Howell Michael in the mile with 3:58.5 at the Martin Luther King Freedom Games.

I remember telling a teammate then about my prognostication for Dave's chances in the 800 meters. I told him Dave didn't have enough speed to ever set a world record there but he surely did for the mile. Well, I hope I'm a better writer than a judge of talent because on July 1, 1972—a year after stepping on the track for the first time after a nine month lay-off—Dave Wottle tied the world record in the 800 meters while winning the Olympic Trials.

My reaction was the same as Dave's wife's. She couldn't believe it when he called her and told her he'd won and tied the world record. When he finally convinced her he wasn't joking she went screaming down the hall proclaiming the news. It's not that anyone on the Bowling Green team thought Dave couldn't win or set the world record. It's just that a world record is an awesome achievement. It's held in such esteem by most people that the person who holds one becomes a superhuman.

Running with and knowing someone who has achieved this status is an educational experience in itself. Having run alongside of him, straining and at full tilt, and being left like I was standing still when he accelerates is not an ego-boosting experience. But it is easier to take when a world record holder does it to you.

To know that he eats and sleeps just like normal individuals and has bad times and good times, can be beaten and is not a god, is the most valuable

experience of knowing a world record holder. The greatest lesson it teaches a person is the one Wottle knew early in life: that you have to live your own life. Don't model your life after someone else's.

Dave was razed for not running in the mornings—the subject of some jealousy because things seemed to come easier for him. He always seemed to work less for what he gained. But he knew most of the time what amount of work he needed to attain his goals, and he had the determination to do the work necessary and the good sense to separate the constructive advice from the destructive suggestions.

A shy, introverted freshman who seethed inside and exploded on the track became a confident, mature senior through his experiences in the world of track and field athletics. Yet he retained some of the boyish characteristics—the openness and straightforward manner—that endear him to the people he meets.

When I saw him for the first time after the Olympics, in November 1972, he came striding out to the track in the familiar baggy orange “sacks,” as Kenny Moore calls them. I could feel the increased confidence in his handshake and tell a distinct change in his personality from the time he left BG on his way to the Olympic Trials and eventually Munich. He was much more sure of himself. Content and satisfied with his success, and happily married, he had everything to look forward to during the season ahead.

Being an Olympic champion is not all parties and parades, however. The responsibilities placed on one gifted enough to win a gold medal are enormous. The calls day and night for interviews and appointments, demands for public appearances, autographs and all the idolatry and recognition can become burdensome, especially to a private person like Wottle.

For the most part, Dave adjusted to it well. One humorous example involved a phone call at 11 one night after Dave had retired for the evening. His wife answered and gave the phone to Dave, who had a three-minute conversation and agreed to meet the other party at 4:30 the next afternoon in his apartment.

At 4:25 the man Dave was going to meet was out at the track getting ready to go meet Wottle when Dave came jogging up to the track. They exchanged greetings and the person expressed surprise that Dave had come out to meet him and knew where he was. Dave said he didn't remember talking to him the night before.

“Jan asked me this morning who was on the phone and I thought it was my cousin,” said Wottle. “I must have had a dream about my cousin calling me at the time when you called because I don't remember talking to you at all.”

Late night phone calls were not the only inconvenience for Dave, as was evident the next time I saw him at the Vons meet in L.A. in May 1973. As he jogged around near the starting line before being introduced for his race, the kids in the stands were in vocal support of their new hero. “Let's go Wottle, go get em,” and other familiar phrases in which only the names are changed for the particular hero of the moment.

After the race, he was swarmed by little people looking for autographs and probably a chance to grab his hat, as a souvenir-hunter did in Eugene later in the year. As Dave took his post-race warmdown, he resembled the Pied Piper leading his brood around the track. For nearly a half-hour after

the race, Dave sat and signed autographs for anyone who approached him.

“I feel I owe it to them,” Dave said afterward. “It’s expected of me.”

Yes, along with the pleasant things—the first-class treatment one gets at the big meets and the interesting people plus the opportunities available to a gold medal winner—come the things that one is “expected to do,” just because he was won a particular honor. Dave does not savor the hounding and autograph sessions, but he has a deep feeling of responsibility which overrides his misgivings about public accountability.

In the five years I’ve known him, Dave has grown tremendously as a person and as an athlete—from a talented, immature adolescent into a successful, gifted adult with a basically conservative outlook that gives him a less “colorful” personality for the media, but a depth of character that has made him accepted and admired member of the community.

## Chapter III

# A TEAM MAN



“After the race, he was swarmed by little people looking for autographs. . . As Dave took his post-race warmdown, he resembled the Pied Piper leading his brood around the track. (Pantovic)



# A COACH'S DELIGHT

“Gentlemen, let me relate to you that youth is priceless, sincerity is wholesome, simplicity is invigorating, humility is refreshing, and with these descriptive words you can begin to formulate a picture of the young man with whom I’ve been very fortunate to have worked with over the past 4½ years—Dave Wottle, the Olympic champion and former world record holder for the 800 meters in 1:44.3.”

Those are the opening comments of a speech by Coach Mel Brodt on the man he coached to Olympic stardom in 1972. That speech, with additional comments by Brodt, is summarized here.

Dave’s road, as in the case with many great performers, was marred by many setbacks. His baptism in the running world was not one which would draw raves from anyone except his devoted coach and a loving mother. A 4:20.2 mile and a 1:59.4 half-mile indicated some amount of ability and success but attracted little attention in 1968 (the year he graduated from high school).

I really didn’t know Dave as a high schooler except for the first two visits he and his Dad made to BGSU in late June 1968. My first impressions were of a tall, thin lad who was a 4:20 miler with no cross-country experience, but a young man who wanted to excel.

His freshman year in cross-country was one which was indicative of this desire when, with a limited base, he performed well and finished second in the frosh Mid-American Conference meet. His frosh track season showed signs of greatness when he ran 4:06.7 alone at an almost perfect pace. Experience and exposure was all that was necessary as he possessed basic acceleration speed, a fair judgment of pace, relaxation qualities and a tremendous desire to win. The experiences at the national USTFF and NCAA meets were the shot needed to spur him on to greatness the next year.

Near the conclusion of his sophomore year, I can very vividly recall Dave’s broad, beaming smile after his first sub-four-minute performance at Indiana in 1970. Dave is basically not a highly emotional person and rarely shows anger or elation. However, I could not help but enjoy his moments of happiness with the 3:59, and his first honest effort in the 880 with a 1:47.8 at the USTFF Meet in Wichita and his 14:00 three-mile effort the next night.

During a great cross-country season in the fall of 1970, disaster struck in the form of stress fractures of both fibulas within four months of each other. You never saw such a dejected, distraught, uptight and confused young man. But a complete lay-off from running for three months after the second injury cured all ailments including the mind. It was during this time that Dave met his wife, so he gained in many ways. And a first competitive effort of 1:52.7 in Canada in July of 1971 brought smiles of happiness

in knowing that he was back and healthy.

Being selected as the captain of our 1971 cross-country team brought renewed responsibilities of leadership and restored confidence to Dave. He became an All-American in leading the team to its best season. This was followed by a great indoor season and an even greater outdoor season in 1972.

Prior to the Olympic Games opening day ceremonies, I met with Dave on Wednesday, Aug. 23. This was after his questionable 5000-meter race on the 19th. Dave was very visibly upset, nervous and unsettled due to the further aggravation of his knee problems as a result of the race. I don't know exactly what possessed him to attempt a race of that distance. Our earlier plans were for a 3000-meter race in early August and then sharpening for the 800 and 1500.

In his defense, Dave had to make many adjustments in his proposed training schedule due to an overzealous workout and feeling of his oats on July 21 while at the Olympic training camp in Maine. The month of August was one of many frustrations for him, and if it weren't for his wife Jan I firmly feel he may have gone home. Consequently our meeting on Aug. 23 was probably the turning point for Dave helping to renew confidence in his ability.

He had lost a lot of valuable time, but I attempted to reestablish in him the realization that his base from the fall and spring could carry him through the Games. We adjusted his workouts to three-a-day (which was highly unusual) for two days and then rested for the first round of trials. Dave's attitude changed during that week. He got stronger and more confident with each performance.

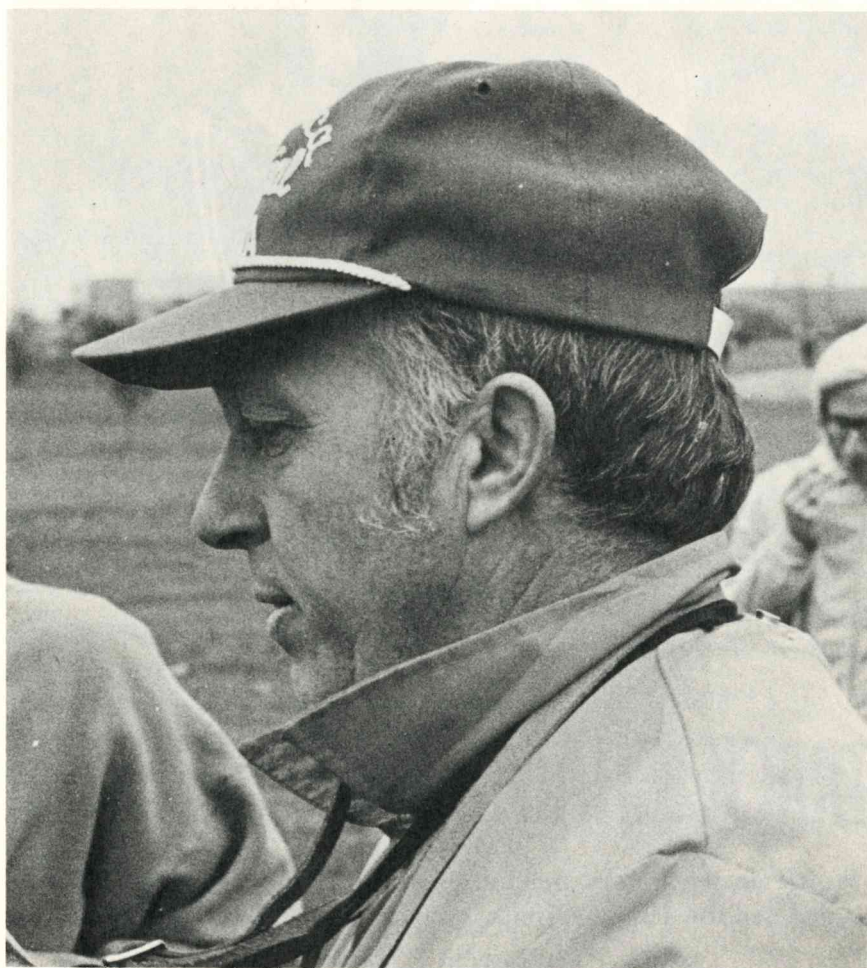
The final in the 800 was just too fast for him in the first 200, but he did not panic.

Dave has one very effective ability which makes him outstanding: his ability to accelerate while running at any pace gives him that definite psychological edge over his opponents in any race in which he competes. We, as a team, stress practice techniques to develop this phase of running. It just happens that Dave possesses better quickness, good leg speed and a burning inner drive to win. These qualities, coupled with being mentally prepared and physically primed, can result in great performances. This was the case in the Olympic Trials too.

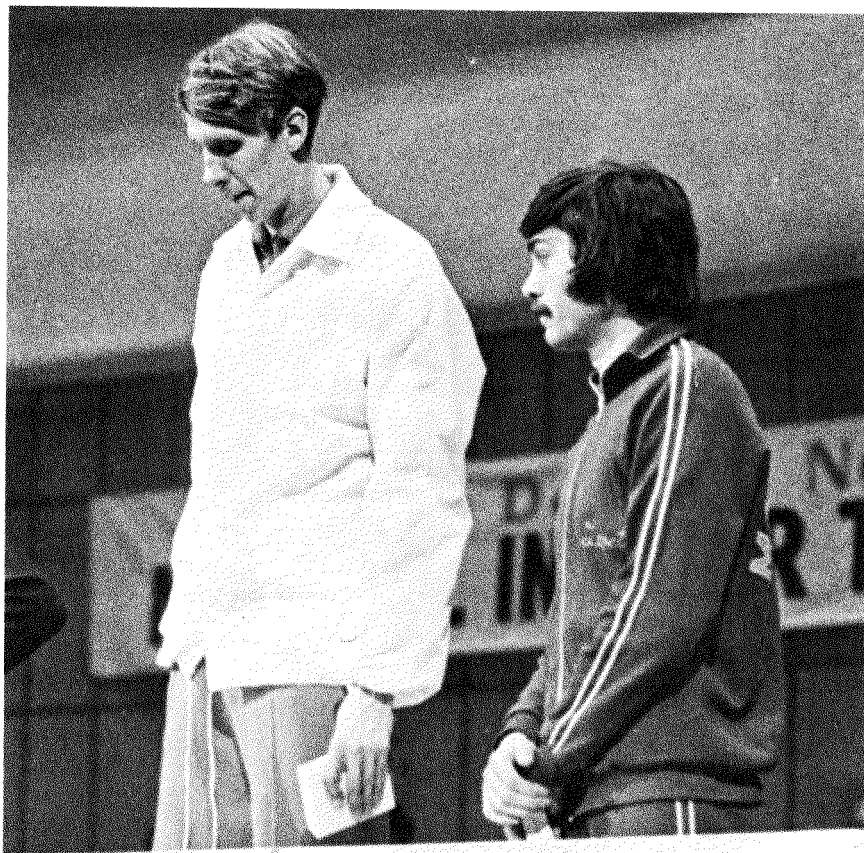
To be truthful, Dave despises workouts, particularly when he has to work out alone. But he never complains about any single workout. Never has he questioned any decisions about the selection of his races.

Dave's one major weakness is his lack of desire to be aggressive and set the pace, probably due to my basic philosophy of "run to win" and conservation of energy for other races. But off and on the track he tends to lay back. I guess it's just the way he is and always will be.

**MEL BRODT:** "Dave despises workouts... But he never complains about a single workout. Never has he questioned any decisions about the selection of his races." (Jay McNally photo)



# WOTTLE'S STATISTICS



News N.C.A.A.  
**TRACK CHAMPIONSHIPS**

Wottle on the victory stand after one of his five NCAA victories  
—this one the 1972 half-mile. (Jay McNally photo)

## DAVE WOTTLE

6'1", 138 pounds. Born Aug. 7, 1950, at Canton, Ohio. Began running in 1965 at age 15. Attended high school at Lincoln of Canton. College at Bowling Green State University. Coached by Mel Brodt. Married to Jan Pressler.

### BEST TIMES

440 yards	47.9 relay (72)	mile	3:53.3 (73)
800 meters	1:44.3 (72)	2 miles	8:39.2 (72)
880 yards	1:47.2 (72)	3 miles	14:00 (70)
1500 meters	3:36.8 (73)	6 miles	30:06 (72)

### PERFORMANCES BY YEAR

1965	Best times: 2:08.6 in 880; 4:50 in mile			
1966	Best times: 2:04.7 in 880; 4:38.6 in mile			
1967	Ohio state meet	mile	4:23.9	4th
	Best times: 2:00.6 in 880; 4:22.3 mile; 10:30 2-mile			
1968	Ohio state meet	mile	4:20.2	1st
	Best times: 1:59.4 in 880; 4:20.2 mile; 10:23 2-mile			
1969	USTFF championships	mile	4:09.7	7th
	NCAA championships	mile	4:09.0	---
	NCAA cross-country	6 miles	30:14	30th
	AAU cross-country	10,000m	32:32.6	32nd
	Best times: 1:54.9 in 880; 4:06.8 mile; 9:26 2-mile; 14:43 3-mile; 33:03 6-mile			
1970	NCAA indoor	mile	4:06.5	4th
	USTFF championships	880	1:47.6	1st
		3 miles	14:00.0	4th
	NCAA championships	mile	4:00.1	2nd
	AAU championships	mile	4:02.7	8th
	Best times: 1:47.8 in 880; 3:59.0 mile; 8:58.8 2-mile; 14:00 3-mile; 30:55 6-mile			
1971	NCAA cross-country	6 miles	30:06	12th
	USTFF cross-country	6 miles	30:36	7th
	(Injured throughout indoor and outdoor track seasons; only track time was 1:52.7 800m.)			
1972	USTFF indoor	mile	4:03.7	1st
	NCAA indoor	880	1:51.8	1st
		mile (relay)	4:02.7	1st
	NCAA championships	1500m	3:42.3	2nd
	AAU championships	800m	1:47.3	1st

Olympic Trials	800m	1:44.3	1st
	1500m	3:42.3	2nd
Olympic Games	800m	1:45.9	1st
	1500m	3:41.6	--

Best times: 1:44.3 in 800m; 1:47.2 880; 3:39.7 1500m;  
3:58.2 mile; 8:39.2 2-mile; 14:51 5000m; 30:06 6-mile

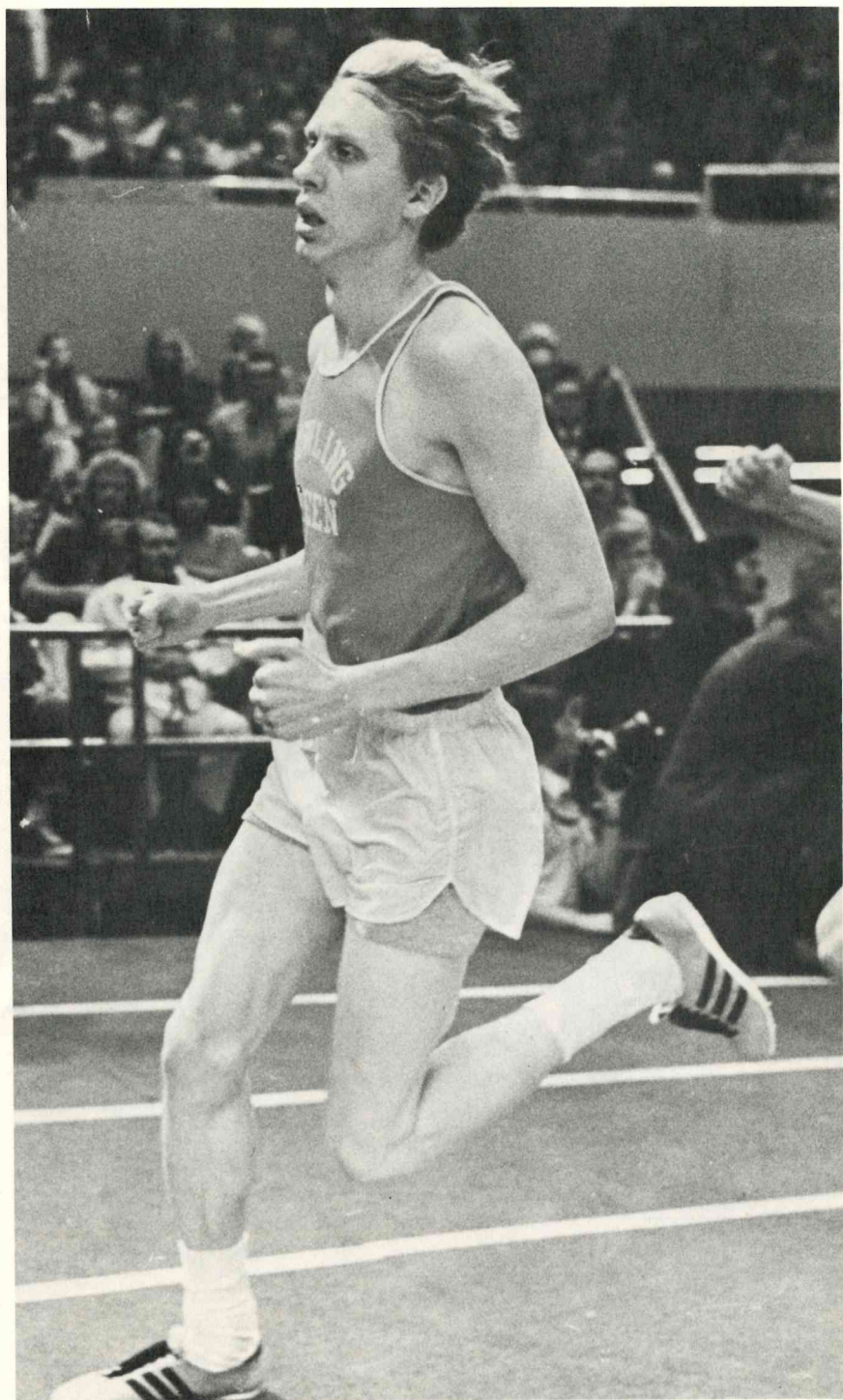
1973

USTFF indoor	mile	4:00.3	1st
NCAA indoor	2 miles	8:51.4	6th
	mile	4:03.4	1st
USTFF outdoor	880	1:49.5	1st
NCAA outdoor	mile	3:57.1	1st
AAU outdoor	880	1:46.6	2nd
US-West Germany	800m	1:46.6	1st
US-Italy	1500m	3:36.8	1st
US-USSR	1500m	3:41.7	1st

Best times: 1:45.3 for 800m; 1:47.6 880; 3:36.8 1500m;  
3:53.3 mile; 8:40 2-mile

**PAGE 45:** A rare view of Wottle racing indoors without his cap. (Stan Pantovic)

**PAGE 46:** One occasion when Wottle's kick falls short. He loses the '72 NCAA 1500 to Jerome Howe of Kansas State. (Steve Sutton photo)







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## DAVE WOTTLE STORY

“ . . . His tactics are unorthodox. He drops behind at first—too far behind, it sometimes seems—then relies on his final spurt to win. At Munich, he didn’t appear to have a chance. He had been injured between the Trials and the Games. At Munich, he let a dangerously wide gap open up in the 800-meter final. Then he raced back, waiting until the last step to claim his victory. . . Then he forgot to take off his white golf cap during the victory ceremony.”

**COVER PHOTO:**

By Stan Pantovic

**PHOTO LEFT:**

By Jay McNally