

Plymouth squads small, but talented

By Harold Lewis
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PLYMOUTH — New Plymouth head cross country coach Mike Follett feels like he's known this year's squad forever.

Follett, who also serves as assistant high school athletic director, has taught in both the elementary and middle schools of the Plymouth system. Most of the kids out this season he's had before in class, albeit when they were quite younger. In some cases, he even coached them while in junior high.

"I've just watched the kids go on," said Follett. "I've watched them progress from children to young adults. It's kind of fun. I think I have built an excellent rapport with the kids."

The Big Red mentor has another reason for this year to appear as if a family affair — only 13 runners will participate on both the girls and boys teams.

"I guess our main strength is that we are more like a family. The boys and girls team are both unique because they care a lot about each other," Follett said. "We're just a close-knit team."

Seniors Tim Collins and Chad Stumbo, junior John Helms, sophomores Chris McClintock, Brad Stumbo and Tim Howard, and freshman Andy Knapp make up the boys team, while seniors Ann Fazzini and Amy Root, sophomores Lynn Miller, April Finnegan, and Kristy Stoodt, and freshman Amanda Classen will compete for the girls.

The boys squad, in particular, seems strong according to Follett.

"I have an outstanding senior in Tim Collins," said Follett of his No. 1 runner. "He put in about 350 to 400 miles before practice even began. He's a great athlete, leader, and provides encouragement to the kids."

"Following close on his heels is

the McClintock boy," he continued. "Those guys are a great 1-2 combination."

One more runner may be all the girls need to achieve a lot of success.

"They are a real tight-knit group," said Follett. "The five-man is our big concern. Our 1-4 (runners) are solid. If we can't find a No. 5 we may win a few and lose a few, unfortunately."

Follett thinks that the Plymouth program has made great strides this

season, despite low numbers, and that a trip to state cannot be counted out of the picture.

"I am so pleased with where we are right now — that I have a very good group of kids that are dedicated," he said. "I would just hope for continued improvement. Right now, whatever I ask them they'll do."

"I made out a practice sheet and put 'Dec. 6 — Columbus' (the site of the state meet) on the calendar," said Follett. "I really think we can have some individuals there."