? North Harrison junior Tyler Byrne won the cross country semi state at Brown County State Park near Nashville Saturday. He had a low time of 15:50, and he helped his fellow Cougars to a 6th place team finish (188 points). Other state qualifying teams are Terre Haute North 49, Bloomington South 107, Floyd Central 131, New Albany 142, and Perry Central 178.

For the first time since the early 1990's, both the boys' cross country teams from Floyd Central and North Harrison have advanced to the IHSAA State Finals in cross country, to be held in Terre Haute Saturday, Nov. 1.

And it wasn't just those two teams that advanced; four of the six teams advancing to the state meet are from the Crawford County Regional. The other two of the four, besides Floyd Central and North Harrison, are New Albany and Perry Central.

The feat didn't escape the notice of local coaches. "We're glad to get to go," said North Harrison boys' coach Jerry Love. "We thought we were in the running. Four teams out of our regional are going to state. I think that speaks well for us down here."

Floyd Central boys' cross country coach Tim Korte said, "It makes it look great. It's great to see our regional represented so well. The same usual suspects will be there, and they'll be there."

And Love was proud of the race that Tyler Byrne ran en route to the semi state title, the first individual semi state title for North Harrison in cross country.

"I can't say enough about what Tyler for the team. He's a super runner and a super kid," said Love. "He's got great talent and a super work effort. He's definitely got a legitimate shot at the state championship."

"I'm just real proud of them. They've overcome some injuries. We overall ran a smart race," Love said of his entire team.

As an example, he said Ryan Foster slipped a little about ½ mile from the finish line at the semi state, but corrected his stride, and managed to finish in 16:52.

"That naturally takes you out of your running stride a little bit. It was a little bit slippery back there in spots," said Love.

Foster's finish was his second best of the year.

Foster's teammate Matt Bruce had a personal record Saturday, finishing in 17:49.

"He's had problems with knees all year, until recent meets," said Love. "He really put it out on the course for us."

Korte had looked at either a second place finish or a third place finish heading into the semi state. He was pleased with how the team did.

"Yes, I was pleased with the place we got. We ran a pretty good race," said Korte. "I think it was one of those years where everything came together. Right now, were in more of an up than a down."

"Two (of our runners) ran good, Sam Mires and Daniel Hunnerkoch," Korte added. "A couple of people had bad races. The average was about what we needed. Our fifth man will have to run a lot better than he did Saturday. There were a couple of muddy spots, but that's something that's expected. It's cross country."

Korte hopes to see his team finish somewhere around 15th place, if everything goes as planned.

"We're happy to represent North Harrison at the state meet next week. I'm really proud of the guys; they've done everything we've asked them to do," said Love.