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? Floyd Central and North Harrison's boys' cross country both finished better than their coaches expected at the IHSAA State Cross Country Meet Saturday at the Lavern Gibson Course near Terre Haute.

The previous week, after having finished third at the Brown County semi state, Floyd Central coach Tim Korte said he was hoping for something like the 12th spot, as a team.

"We were up further than I thought we'd be," said Korte. The Highlanders finished in 10th place with 289 points, and North Harrison was in 19th place with 436 points, who outperformed local teams Perry Central (20th place, 453 points), and New Albany (22nd place, 499 points).

His top four runners ran as a pack together, and were closer to the front of the race than he had counted on. Not that he's complaining.

"We ran a really good race. The 1-2-3-4- pack they were in was really tight, and the location of the pack was up pretty far. From mile one, they were in the mix with all of the big guys," said Korte. "All five of my top five looked really good today. I figured if I could get my top four under 16:30, then we could do big things, and it would probably depend on our fifth man."

Leading the way for the Highlanders was No. 1 runner Justin Hodge. He didn't get off to an extremely quick start, but saved his strength for the last 2,000 meters or so. Hodge ended up

"He always looks pretty strong at the end," Korte said of Hodge.

Tyler Byrne ended up in 9th place for the Cougars (15:49.7), and is only a junior. His older brother Ryan finished in 2nd place in the 2004 state meet as a senior.

"He's running in a different class," North Harrison boys' cross country coach Jerry Love said of Byrne's performance.

Love was also extremely pleased with the performances of the other North Harrison runners.

"The three freshmen really had a great race; the Guy twins, Johnnie and Josh, and Ryan Foster," said Love. "The freshmen weren't intimidated by the state meet. We plan on being there several years."

Love said that they had a feeling that this season could be something special, and he was pleased with the way it unfolded. He said it takes a lot of luck as well, with regards to a lack of injuries.

We wanted to get this team to the state," explained Love. "Right now, it's a great feeling. The season is what we thought it might be. I wanted to give as much credit to the guys as I could. They did the work.

They've done everything we've asked them. We got our miles in during the summer. We were seven deep this year. That makes a big difference. The depth of the team has helped. Everybody has to be hitting at their personal record or better."

"We're a team that can be in contention. We're a credible team; we've established that. Ultimately, you've got to give credit to the kids. They've been a fun bunch to coach. They've got great attitudes."

Looking to next season, both squads will lose some valuable runners, with Floyd losing his top four, and five of his top seven. North Harrison will lose four seniors, but Tyler Byrne was their No. 1 runner, and is a senior next year. Love's No. 2, No. 3, and No. 5 runners were just freshmen this year.

"That was nice that was a nice way to end the season to be on top of New Albany and Perry Central. It was nice there at the end to be on top of them. It'll be competitive next year. Our area's being the star right now. That was what we wanted to do this year, to make it to state," Love added.