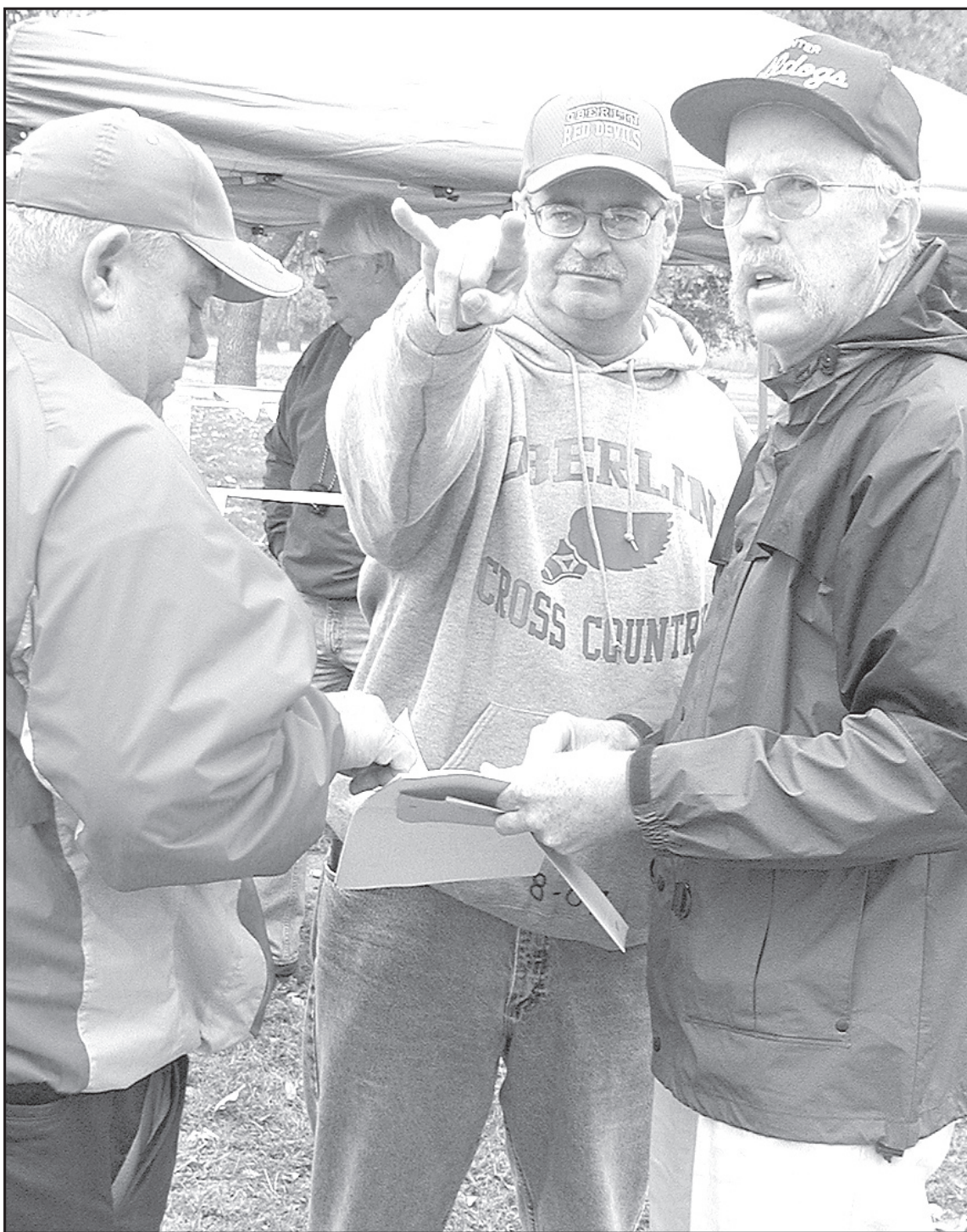




BEFORE THE MEET, Rebecca Helm (above) stretched out in the grass, leaning her back against a teammate, at the Oberlin Country Club. Coach

Dick Ahlberg (below) pointed out something to the coach of the Quinter team while Decatur Community High Principal Charles Haag listened.



League meet here runs smoothly with volunteers

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**

Despite wet, chilly weather, fans lined the paths Saturday as runners worked their way across the fairways and trails at the Oberlin Country Club golf course.

Moms, dads, sisters, brothers, fellow students and supporters cheered the runners as they pushed for a medal during the Northwest Kansas League cross country championships.

Decatur Community High Athletic Director Joe Dreher said 43 boys ran the 3.2 mile course and 29 girls ran a 2.5-mile circuit. That included seven boys on the Oberlin team and five girls.

It takes a lot of volunteers to put on a cross country meet at the golf course, he said, either the annual Oberlin Invitational or a league meet.

One thing that makes it a little easier, he said, is that they use an electronic timer. When someone crosses the finish line, a volunteer pushes the button and the runner's time is printed out. Another volunteer does back-up timing with a stop



watch, and the times are read off as each runner crosses the line.

Other volunteers work at keeping the runners in the order they finished the race, Mr. Dreher said, and still others make sure the runners stay on the course.

For each meet, they need 15 to 20 helpers, he said, thanking all of those who have helped with the meets this year. Mr. Dreher said they have always had good support for the cross country team and plenty of workers who volunteer.

Coach Dick Ahlberg does a lot of the things needed to get ready for a meet on his own, including setting up registration, Mr. Dreher said, adding that Coach Ahlberg does a good job.

Both the Decatur Community High boys and girls finished third at the league meet. (See story on the Sports Page in Section A.) The runners have been practicing since the beginning of the school year and often can be seen running around town.



CHRIS LARSEN (left) stretched before the Northwest Kansas League Championship cross country race on Saturday. Coach Dick Ahlberg (above) talked with volunteer Colleen Rittmann.

— Photo by Jim Merriott