

SECTIONAL PREVIEW-MORRIS COUNTY STYLE

SECTIONAL SATURDAY!!!!

It's the busiest day and one of the best days of the season as every public school team in the state will toe the line this Saturday (Nov. 9) in high stakes sectional championship races as they try to keep their seasons alive by qualifying for the State Group Championships (Nov. 16 at Holmdel Park).

Several Morris County teams and runners have a shot at glory, but before I get into the preview- here's some important general info.

SECTIONAL SITES

NORTH JERSEY, SECTION 1-Garret Mountain, Woodland Park

NORTH JERSEY, SECTION 2-Warinanco Park, Elizabeth

CENTRAL JERSEY-Thompson Park, Jamesburg

SOUTH JERSEY-Delsea High School, Franklinville

SCHEDULE FOR EACH SITE

10:00 am - Group 1 Girls

10:25 am - Group 4 Girls

10:50 am - Group 1 Boys

11:15 am - Group 4 Boys

11:40 am - Group 2 Girls

12:05 pm - Group 3 Girls

12:30 pm - Group 2 Boys

12:55 pm - Group 3 Boys

QUALIFYING-The five teams and top 10 individuals in each group in each section will qualify for the State Group Championships on Nov. 16 at Holmdel Park.

At the state Group Championships, the top three teams and top 10 runners in each group plus two wild card teams and 10 wild runners will advance to the Meet of Champions on Nov. 23 at Holmdel Park.

Ok, now it's time to take a look at what to expect from the Shore Conference's finest at the sectional meets.

NORTH JERSEY, SECTION 1

GROUP 4

MORRIS TEAMS: Morris Knolls and Randolph

The No. 2 Randolph girls, the Morris County champion, will square off with No. 16 and defending champion and Bergen County champion Ridgewood. Ridgewood has won a state record 21 sectional titles, but coach Len Pietrewicz's pack has the edge and is the pick to win its fifth title in the past seven years and its 11th overall.

Randolph has won sectional titles in North Jersey, Section 1 in 2007, '08, '09, and '11, and has won titles in North Jersey, Section 2 in 1980, '81, '82 and '84, '92 and '96.

Randolph, which smashed the Greystone course record at the county meet (18:47), is led by the 1-2 punch of juniors Liz Lansing and Carole Harsch. If the Rams stay healthy they have the potential to win the state Group 4 and Meet of Champions titles. They are that good!!!

Also keep an eye on the Morris Knolls girls in this race. The Golden Eagles have the firepower to get into the top five and advance to the state meet.

In the boys race, Ridgewood is favored to win its fourth straight and 20th overall. Randolph looks like it will be in a scramble with Hackensack and Clifton for the last qualifying spot.

GROUP 3

MORRIS TEAMS- Montville, Morris Hills, Mount Olive,

The girls race for the top spot should be a dandy as defending champion Mount Olive, ranked No. 10 in the state, battles Passaic County champion Wayne Hills. Last year, Mount Olive edged Wayne Hills by seven for the title. Mount Olive, under coach Mike Behre, has won 13 sectional titles (11 in North Jersey, Section 2).

In addition to Mount Olive and Wayne Hills, Northern Highlands, and Indian Hills should also be in the mix.

"It looks like it will be a very close race," Behre said of the battle with Wayne Hills. "Key is going to be staying close and breaking up the front runners and packing in front of their four and five."

In the boys race, Morris Hills, which has won eight title since 2003, is the underdog against defending champion and No. 18 Indian Hills and No. 20 Old Tappan.,

But Morris Hills coach Sean Robinson said his guys are ready to try to spring the upset.

"We have had this meet circled all year," said Robinson. "We have accepted every thrashing from Morris County knowing it would prepare us for the state tournament. My guys typically run their Greystone times within a five second window (faster or slower) at Garret. They all have their assignments and we have done our homework. We know how to run Garret. we will run the course correctly and then settle up the mountain."

The individual matchup up front should be a good one between defending champion and Passaic County champion Brendan Ungemach of Wayne Hills and Bergen County Meet of Champions winner Bobby Corcoran of Indian Hills.

GROUP 2

MORRIS TEAMS-Dover, Jefferson, Kinnelon, Morris County Tech, Mountain Lakes

The big question in this is how will Mountain Lakes handle the step up from Group 1 to Group 2.

After owning Group 1 with three straight boys sectional titles from 2010-2012 and six girls titles since 2004, the Lakers feel they are ready for the challenge.

The Mountain Lakes boys features the bets 1-2 punch in the race in senior Chris Luciano and junior Ben DeVenezia. DeVenezia won the sectional and state titles in Group 1 last year and Luciano was second in both races last year and was recently the runner-up at the Morris County Championships.

On paper, the Mountain Lakes guys, who won NJAC Small School title, are behind Ramsey and River Dell. 2012 champion Wallkill Valley has moved down to Group 1 this season. Meanwhile in

the girls race, Mountain Lakes comes our second, Jefferson third, and Kinnelon fourth in the virtual scoring.

“We know Group 2 is a big step, but everyone is running well and we're looking forward to seeing them race, said Mountain Lakes coach Sue Bessin. “We're telling them it's (winning) is possible.”

GROUP 1

MORRIS TEAMS: Boonton, Butler, Pequannock

The North Warren girls, the NJAC Small School champion, should roll to a repeat title.

But the boys race could be an instant classic as just five points separate three teams on paper (2012 Group 2 sectional champion Wallkill Valley, Cresskill and Bogota). Wallkill Valley junior Craig Corti, the state Group 2 champ last fall, is favored to win.

NORTH JERSEY, SECTION 2

GROUP 4

MORRIS TEAMS-None

In the boys race, No. 8 Westfield , the Union County champion, will clash with No. 12 Millburn, the Essex County champion. Westfield has won three in a row and 22 sectional titles overall, the third most in state history. Millburn is seeking its first title since 2007.

The individual race should be a good one as defending champion Matt Luppino of Westfield will run shoulder-to-shoulder with Essex County champion Rob Stone of Millburn, the sectional champion in Group 3 last year, and David Mugavero of North Hunterdon, the Skyland Conference runner-up. A Millburn runner has captured a sectional title six straight years.

In the girls Group 4 race, No. 6 Westfield, No. 9 and defending champion North Hunterdon, and No. 12 Ridge will go head-to-head. Westfield is seeking its first title since 2004 while North Hunterdon has captured 16 titles, the third most in state history.

GROUP 3

MORRIS TEAMS: Chatham, Morristown, Parsippany Hills, Roxbury, West Morris, Mendham

Morris County should dominate the boys and girls races.

On the boys side, No. 9 Morristown, the Morris County winner, is favored beat No. 15 Voorhees and repeat as the winner and capture its 17th title. Mendham, despite missing injured front

runner, Chatham, and Roxbury are very much in play for top five qualifying spots.

Mendham won four straight titles from 2008-2011. Chatham, seeking its first title since 2006, has moved up from Group 2. Roxbury, trying to advance to the State Group meet for the first time since placing second in North Jersey, Section 1, Group 4 in 2005, could be in a great battle with Somerville for the last qualifying spot.

"We expect to compete, said Chatham coach Pat Barry, whose team was third at the Morris County Championships. "Those teams all make us better. We're excited and ready for a heck of a race."

In the girls race, Mackenzie Barry of Mendham will seek to join a prestigious list of four-time champions, and Voorhees will put its state best streak of seven straight girls championships on the line.

Barry is favored to become just the second girl in the section and 12th girl in state history to win four individual titles. Lanie Thompson of Voorhees won fourth straight from 2006-08.

Meanwhile, Voorhees is attempting to extend its sectional winning streak to eight. Voorhees, up from Group 2 this season, will have its hands full with No. 11 West Morris and No. 19 and defending champion Mendham.

West Morris hasn't won a sectional title in 21 years.

"We are going into Saturday with confidence, but no means underestimating the talent on both Voorhees and Mendham," said West Morris coach Jay Herrigel. "All I can say is that the West Morris girls are excited."

GROUP 2

MORRIS TEAMS: Hanover Park, Madison, Parsippany

Both the boys and girls races look like a battle between Summit and Bernards.

In the boys race, No. 13 Summit and defending champion and No. 14 Bernards could have an instant classic. Bernards has won 31 sectional titles, No. 2 in state history behind Haddonfield's 32.

While Summit and Bernards battle it out for first, keep an eye on Madison and Cliffside Park. The Dodgers are projected to finish fifth, but I wouldn't be shocked if it finished higher.

In the girls race, I like Parsippany's chances of getting in the top five and advancing, while Hanover Park could surprise if the top five all run their best races.

GROUP 1

MORRIS TEAMS: Whippany Park

The girls race might be the closest race in the state. So close that it could come down to a sixth-runner tiebreaker as Whippany Park, Weequahic, McNair, and Secaucus are separated by just four points on paper!!!!

Whippany Park is trying to win its fourth title in five years. McNair won last year.

In the boys competition, McNair has won two straight, but Lyndhurst is favored to win big. I am predicting Whippany Park to finish third.

NEW JERSEY'S RUNNER OF THE WEEK

Trinity Christian senior Josiah Hanko was named the N.J. Runner of the Week by The Star-Ledger last week after his course record breaking performance at the Morris County Championships last week. Here is the profile on Josiah.

JOSIAH HANKO, TRINITY CHRISTIAN

Senior, 6-3, 165 pounds

JUST THE STATS: Hanko ran a course record 15:24.3 to win the individual title at the Morris County Championships on Oct. 29 on the grounds of Greystone at Central Park in Parsippany. Hanko's time broke the course record of 15:29.6 set in 2010 by Morgan Pearson of Delbarton.

REACTION: "I am thrilled with winning my first county cross-country title. After taking second last year, I really wanted to come back this year with a win and knew that it was going to be tough race with good competition. I am genuinely shocked with taking the course record and performing so well, and a lot of the credit goes to Ryan Skripak, my physical therapist from Montville Physical Therapy, who got my calf back into shape after my injury. And overall, this is a huge drive for me as I approach the state meets to do well."

PERSONAL BESTS:

Holmdel Park-15:59

800- 1:57.8

1,600- 4:16.38

3,200- 9:02.3

NEXT RACE: Hanco will defend his state Non Public B title on Nov. 16 at Holmdel Park.

SUMMER TRAINING: ``This summer I did between 55-60 miles a week with some hill training."

HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED IN DISTANCE RUNNING: "I got into distance running because my dad (Steve) was a runner in high school up until his two hip-surgeries, and all three of my older brothers are into distance running which has been a huge inspiration. I started distance running in middle school in fifth grade, and have enjoyed it so much that I have stuck with it since."

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT RUNNING: ``On my long runs I love the feeling when you zone out and cruise through your run. You feel so good and feel as though you can go on forever. Also, I love the challenge that racing gives because it is both highly physically and mentally demanding."

FAVORITE COURSE TO RUN: ``So far my favorite course is Holmdel. It is very challenging and very different from any other course that I have run on, which makes it unique. And it is a course that I will never forget."

HIGHLIGHT OF CAREER: ``The highlight of my career so far is definitely this year's Morris County Championship meet. I did so much better than expected, and it has changed my view of this season dramatically."

BREAKTHROUGH RACE: ``My breakthrough race was in spring track of my sophomore year at the Meet of Champions. I was seeded 13th and was not feeling too great about the race and had a phenomenal day and took fourth with a huge PR (at the time) of 9:14."

CRAZIEST THING THAT'S HAPPENED TO YOU WHILE RUNNING: ``When I was on one of my long runs a lady driving did not look both ways coming out of a side street as I was crossing over and I had to jump on the hood of the car to avoid getting hit. It was probably the scariest situation that I have been in while running."

GOALS FOR THE REST OF THE SEASON: ``My goals are to win the state Non-Public B race, win Meet of Champions, and to qualify for the Foot Locker National meet."

FAVORITE RUNNER: ``My oldest brother, Andrew. He set for me the ultimate example of dedication, hard-work, and leadership."

FAVORITE MOVIE: "Gladiator"

FAVORITE FOOD: Pasta

OTHER ACTIVITIES/HOBBIES: ``I love to bike, hike, swim, and do pretty much anything outdoors related."

TRADING PLACES: ``If I had to switch places with someone for one day, I would want to switch places with an Olympic runner like Kenenisa Bekele, who holds the world records in the 5k and 10k, to see what it would be like to run at that level."

PRESIDENT FOR A DAY: ``I would keep privatized insurance, take away minimum wage in a way to promote freedom, and seek to increase American jobs."

IN 10 YEARS: ``I see myself married, working, and of course still running all the time.

COLLEGE CHOICE: Duke

DELBARTON IS MAKING WAVES

The Delbarton Green Wave, under coach John Barnicle, had its best races of the season at the

Morris County Championships last week when it finished second to Morristown.

In the freshman, JV and varsity races combined-Delbarton had 17 guys PR's!!!!

Delbarton averaged 16:39 at the county meet and had an impressive 1-5 compression of 43 seconds as it finished with 85 points, eight points ahead of third-place Chatham.

Delbarton's top 7 were-

6-Senior John O'Reilly, 16:12

15-Senior Mike Maguire, 16:37

16-Senior Robbie Siegel, 16:39

24-Junior Jordan Earlywine, 16:51

28-Freshman Anthony Kearns, 16:55

33-Junior Teryon Lowery, 16:59.

56-Freshman Joey DeFeo, 17:32

Delbarton will be back in action at Saturday's (Nov. 9) New Jersey Catholic Conference Championships along with other Morris County Non-Public teams at Warinanco Park in Elizabeth.

The NJCTC meet, which will follow the North Jersey, Section 2 meet, is not a qualifying meet for the state meet. All Non Public teams have already qualified for the state Non Public Championships on Nov. 16 at Holmdel Park. The Non Public teams are split into A (large schools) and B (small schools).

SKED-JV girls-2:35. JV boys-3:00. Varsity girls-3:20. Varsity boys-3:45

Look out for Delbarton at the state Non Public A race on Nov. 16 at Holmdel Park. I think the Green Wave have a great chance of placing third behind No. 1 CBA and No. 5 Don Bosco and advancing to the Meet of Champions!!!

STATE RANKINGS

BOYS

1-Christian Brothers

2-Haddonfield

3-West Windsor South

4-Middletown North

5-Don Bosco Prep

6-Cherry Hill East

7-South Brunswick

8-Westfield

9-Morristown

10-Hillsborough

11-Holmdel

12-Millburn

13-Summit

14-Bernards

15-Voorhees

16-Pope John

17-Southern Reg.

18-Indian Hills

19-Highland Reg.

20-Old Tappan

GIRLS

1-Red Bank Catholic

2-Randolph

3-Rumson

4-Haddonfield

5-Shawnee

6-Westfield

7-Hillsborough

8-West Windsor South

9-North Hunterdon

10-Mount Olive

11-West Morris

12-Ridge

13-Middletown South

14-Freehold Twp.

15-Seneca

16-Ridgewood

17-Millburn

18-Mount St. Dominic

19-Mendham

20-Jackson