

MORRIS COUNTY REWIND/FAST FORWARD

Morris County runners and teams burned up the trails on Sectional Saturday with several eye-popping performances that proved once again why the county is regarded as one the best areas in the state for distance running.

There was Mackenzie Barry's sizzling 4-peat, the instant classic and breathtaking victory produced by the Chatham boys, the biggest win of Chris Luciano's career as he led Mountain Lakes to another title, the breakthrough victory by the West Morris girls, Liz Lansing's first-place finish to spark the Randolph girls to a dominating victory, and Mount Olive girls repeating as champions.

Also on Saturday, Delbarton continued its great late season surge by placing second to CBA at the NJCTC Championships at Warinanco Park in Elizabeth.

Ok, let's dig deeper into what was a day filled with several magical moments as several teams and runners punched their tickets to this Saturday's State Group Championships at Holmdel Park.

MORRIS COUNTY REWIND

The first thing I want to do is throw out some mind-boggling numbers.

There were a total of 22 teams from Morris County (12 girls teams and 10 boys) that qualified for this Saturday's State Group Championships, five teams were crowned champions (three girls and two boys), and four runners won individual titles (two boys and two girls).

And how about what the Group 3 teams from Morris County did at the North Jersey, Section 2 meet at Warinanco Park in Elizabeth. They took eight of the 10 qualifying spots (4 boys and 4 girls)!!!!!!! Talk about killing a race!!!

To put the 22 qualifying teams into better perspective, there were a total of 80 qualifying spots available (40 boys and 40 girls) in North Jersey, Sections 1 and 2 combined, so that means Morris County grabbed more than 25 percent of the available spots. Keep in mind that in addition to Morris County, North Jersey, Sections 1 and 2 consists of teams from Bergen County, Passaic County, Hudson County, Essex County, Union County, Hunterdon County, Warren County and Sussex County.

NOTE-Of the 22 teams from Morris County that advanced out of the sectionals, seven schools are sending both their boys and girls teams into the Group Championships-They are Randolph, Chatham, Morristown, Mendham, Mountain Lakes, Whippany Park, and Kinnelon.

MOVING ON

Here's list of every Morris County team that qualified for the State Group Meet with their sectional finish listed alongside.

BOYS

GROUP 4

Randolph (5th in Group 4)

GROUP 3

Morris Hills (3rd in NJ. Sec. 1)

Chatham (1st in NJ. Sec. 2)

Morristown (2nd in NJ. Sec. 2)

Mendham (4th in NJ. Sec. 2)

Roxbury (5th NJ. Sec. 2-first time qualifying for state meet since 2005)

GROUP 2

Mountain Lakes (1st in NJ. Sec. 1)

Kinnelon (5th in NJ. Sec. 1)

Madison (5th in NJ. Sec. 2)

GROUP 1

Whippany Park (4th in NJ. Sec. 2)

GIRLS

Group 4

Randolph (1st in NJ. Sec. 1)

Morris Knolls (5th in NJ. Sec. 1)

GROUP 3

Mount Olive (1st in NJ. Sec. 1)

West Morris (1st in NJ. Sec. 2)

Mendham (3rd in NJ. Sec. 2)

Morristown (4th in NJ. Sec. 2)

Chatham (5th in NJ. Sec. 2)

GROUP 2

Mountain Lakes (2nd in NJ. Sec. 1)

Jefferson (3rd in NJ. Sec. 1)

Kinnelon (4th in NJ. Sec. 1)

Parsippany (4th in NJ. Sec. 2)

GROUP 1

Whippany Park (2nd in NJ. Sec. 2)

NORTH JERSEY, SECTION 1-GARRET MOUNTAIN-WOODLAND PARK

LANGING LEADS RAMS

Liz Lansing's great rookie season on the trails continued when the junior finished first in 18:53 to spark the Randolph girls to 28-46 win over defending champion Ridgewood in Group 4. It's the fifth title in the past 7 years for the Rams and its 11th overall. Randolph put four runners in the top eight to secure the win. Liz wellman was 2nd in 19:07, Margaret Thomson was 5th in 19:23 and Carole Harsch, normally the #2 runner for Randolph, ran through some pain as she injured her ankle around the mile mark. She still managed to place 8th overall and fourth on her team in 19:49. Harsch, who also missed time earlier in the season with a sore ankle, is a gamer and is listed as probable to take the line at Saturday's state meet.

STORMING THE HILL

Locked in a tight and tense battle with Wayne Hills for the second straight year, Mount Olive made a big push up the long uphill to the finish line to rally for its second straight Group 3 title, 55-65 over Wayne Hills. Mount Olive has now won 14 sectional titles.

Sarah Masukewicz (fifth) and Alexandra Christian (sixth) led the charge for the Marauders by each running 19:19, and No. 5 runner Erin Schafer come up big as she beat the No. 5 runner from Wayne Hills by 14 places to seal the deal.

DIFFERENT GROUP-SAME RESULT

The Mountain Lakes boys, who won a third straight sectional title in Group 1 last year, were motivated to prove it could be just as succesful when they moved up to Group 2 this season.

They proved it in victorious fashion as the Lakers made it 4 straight sectional titles by edging Ramsey, 57-66. It's the 8th sectional title over for Mountain Lakes.

Senior Chris Luciano, second at the Morris County Championships, continued his red hot running for Mountain Lakes by winning in 16:02. Junior Ben DeVenezia, the sectional and state champion in Group 1 last year, was third in 16:30.

NORTH JERSEY, SECTION 2-WARINANCO PARK, ELIZABETH

BARRY PUTS EXCLAMATION POINT ON 4TH STRAIGHT WIN

Senior Mackenzie Barry of Mendham ran away with her fourth straight title in Group 3 in a blistering 18:24, the the fastest sectional time ever at Warinanco and the third-fastest time in course history.

Only Jodie Bilotta of North Hunterdon, who ran a course record 18:22 in 1986 and 18:23 in 1987, has ever covered Warinanco's 3.25-mile championship course faster than Barry.

Barry became just the second girl in North Jersey, Section 2 history to win four titles and is just the 12th in state history to accomplish the feat. Lanie Thompson of Voorhees (2005-08) is the only other girl to win four titles in North Jersey, Section 2.

``It's just amazing to be classified and be in that group of such outstanding runners," Barry said. ``To be in that category with them (Thompson and Bilotta) is just great. I'm really excited to run such a big PR for this course, and it makes me even more excited for what the rest of the season has to offer."

INSTANT CLASSIC

The Chatham boys have been chasing Morristown all season. After losing to Morristown at both the NJAC and Morris County Championships, Chatham finally accomplished its goal and caught and passed its nemesis in the most dramatic race of the day in Group 3.

Chatham was behind Morristown (led by individual champin Sean Lyons-16:18) by one point after each team had four runners cross the line, but junior Grant Hauck edged Morristown's 5th runner by two places and five seconds to give Chatham the upset victory, 65-66.

For Chatham, which moved up to Group 3 this year, it was its first sectional title in five years and 11th overall.

Chatham junior Will Mitchell, third in 16:22, said that even though Morristown won the conference and county titles, the Cougars never lost faith that it could win.

``We knew it would be close and that we had a chance," said Mitchell. ``We have been trying to beat Morristown all season and knew it would take our best race to do it. We we all ran PRs for this course and it turned out to be just enough to win this by one point. We couldn't be more

excited about what we did."

Chatham coach Pat Barry was ecstatic over the victory.

"As usual, we did things as a team and we love the result," said Barry. "My hat is off to Morristown as well. It took just the right combination of things for us to finally catch them. Coach Paul Buccino does a great job! there!!! He coaches a great bunch of competitors."

SHARKEY AND CASTANEDA SPARK WEST MORRIS

Senior Brennan Sharkey finished second in 18:38, No. 12 in Warinanco Park history, and rising sophomore star Sierra Castaneda was third in 18:59 to lead West Morris to its first sectional title in 21 years in Group 3.

West Morris girls scored an eight-point win over Voorhees. Voorhees, up from Group 2, had won seven straight sectional titles.

"This was one of our biggest goals all year and to accomplish this is just amazing," said Sharkey.

MORRIS COUNTY FAST FORWARD

GROUP CHAMPIONSHIPS

Morris County has a legitimate shot to win at least four of the 12 team titles at Saturday's State Group Championships at Holmdel Park, and has a chance for as many as three individual champions.

The Randolph girls (Group 4), Mount Olive girls (Group 3), Villa Walsh girls (Non Public B), Morristown boys (Group 3), Chatham boys (Group 3) and the Mountain Lakes boys (Group 2) are all among the team favorites.

Meanwhile, Mackenzie Barry of Mendham is going for a rare three-peat in Group 3, and Chris Luciano of Mountain Lakes (Group 2) and Liz Lansing of Randolph (Group 4) could also win.

BOYS

Despite the one-point loss to Chatham at the sectional meet, Morristown coach Paul Buccino said the season long goal for his team remains in place.

"Chatham ran a great race and coach Pat Barry and his team deserved to win," said Buccino, whose team is seeking its first state title since winning a second straight Group 3 title in 1997. "But the loss hasn't changed our feeling that we can win the state Group 3 title on Saturday. We didn't run our best race at sectionals, but I am confident we will run much smarter at the state meet and compete with Middletown North and all the other great Group 3 teams. I believe we can get five guys under 17 minutes. If we do that we will be tough to beat. Winning this race has been our goal for a couple years now, and these guys have been in a lot of big time races. I am confident they will all rise to the occasion."

Chatham is seeking its first state title since winning the Group 1 Championship in 1977.

In Group 2, Luciano and DeVenezia, two of many runners that have a shot at winning, will try to become extend the Mountain Lakes streak to three straight individual winners. Steohen Lewandowski won Group 1 in 2011 and DeVenezia won Group 1 last year.

Luciano and DeVenezia will try to lead the Lakers back to the Meet of Champions in a loaded race that includes favored Haddonfield and Holmdel, which has won the last two titles.

Delbarton is another team to keep an eye on.

The Green Wave, second at both the Morris County Championships and the NJCTC Championships, have a very good chance of getting a top 3 spot in the boys Non Public A race and advancing to the Meet of Champions.

While CBA, the No. 1 team in the state, and No. 5 Don Bosco Prep figure to grab the top two spots, Delbarton appears to be the next best team. They will probably battle St. Peter's Prep and Pope John for that third and final qualifying spot.

GIRLS

Mackenzie Barry of Mendham will try to become just the 11th girl in state history to win three straight state titles, but she will be in the deepest race of the day as she takes on Josette Norris of Tenafly, and Grace Dwyer of Nottingham in Group 3.

Barry has a Holmdel best of 18:14. Dwyer, who won the Central Jersey title in 18:20, has run 18:27 at Holmdel, and North Jersey, Section 1 winner Norris, one of the nation's top milers, broke the course at Darlington Park this year and has a Holmdel best of 18:31.

West Morris' Brennan Sharkey, the runner-up in North Jersey, Section 2, and Ocean City's Bridget Flynn, the South Jersey winner in 18:22, should also be in the mix up front.

In the Group 3 team race, coach Mike Behre's Mount Olive pack is aiming for its second title and first since 1989, and West Morris is shooting for its first state title. Central Jersey champ Middletown South and South Jersey winner Ocean City and South Jersey runner-up Seneca all have a shot to win.

This race looks very close like it will come down to the team that has the tighter pack, something Mount Olive prides itself on.

The Group 4 girls race should be a dandy as Randolph goes for its second title ever against a stacked field that includes a bunch of teams ranked in the state. They include surging West Windsor South, Hillsborough, Shawnee, Millburn, Westfield, North Hunterdon, Freehold Township, Ridgewood, Ridge, Jackson and Toms River North.

Hillsborough has won three straight titles, but lost to West Windsor-Plainsboro South (49-88) at

the Central Jersey meet.

West Windsor South is seeking its first group championship in school history. Randolph is in search of its first title since 2009. Shawnee, the South Jersey winner, will be going for its ninth group title and first since 2003. And North Jersey, Section 2 winner Millburn has come on strong and could win its first title. North Hunterdon will be going for its ninth title all-time, Westfield and Freehold Township have never won, and 15 Ridgewood will go for its fifth group title all-time and first since 1999.

The two wild cards team qualifiers into the Meet of Champions will almost certainly come out of the girls Group 4 race.

The individual race should come down to a battle between Randolph junior Liz Lansing, the North Jersey, Section 1 winner in 18:53, North Hunterdon junior Eve Glasergreen, the North Jersey, Section 2 champion in 18:42, Old Bridge's Rachel Belmont, the Central Jersey winner in 18:40, and Williamstown's Vickie Ajimoko, who won the South Jersey race in 18:24.

Keep an eye on Villa Walsh in the girls Non Public B race. Villa Walsh won the State Prep B champions have a great shot to win its second state title ever. It also won in 2009.

PREVIEWS AND PREDICTIONS ON ALL 12 STATE GROUP CHAMPIONSHIPS RACES ARE HERE.

<http://highschoolsports.nj.com/news/article/1338127971634371008/cross-country-group-championships-previews-and-predictions-for-every-team-and-individual-race/#/0>

Who do you think will win each of the team races at the State Group Championships?

Click this link to cast your votes -

<http://highschoolsports.nj.com/news/article/485411893396824714/cross-country-group-championships-make-your-pick-12-polls-12-races-12-champions/#/0>

IMPORTANT GROUP MEET INFO

PARKING- There is no parking allowed at Holmdel Park at the Group Championships. Parking is permitted at the Vonage parking lot, where shuttle buses will run all day back and forth to Holmdel Park. There will be a \$1 charge to use the shuttle bus service. The Vonage lot is located on the corner of Holmdel Road and Newman Springs Road.

Statement from Don Danser, the NJSIAA Cross-Country Tournament Director-

“Coaches and athletes, please tell your parents and friends that in order to help with the cost of the shuttle buses, there will be a \$1.00 charge per person, payable before you board the bus in the Vonage parking lot. When you pay your dollar, someone will stamp your hand which will be your ticket to use the bus as many times you want/need to during the course of the day.”

QUALIFYING -The top 3 teams and top 10 runners from each race and 2 wild card teams and 10 wild card runners will advance to the Meet of Champions on Nov. 23 at Holmdel Park.

GROUP RACE SCHEDULE

10 a.m.-Girls Group 3

10:30-Girls Group 2

11-Boys Group 3

11:30-Boys Group 2

12-Girls Non Public A

12:30-Girls Non Public B

1:00-Boys Non Public A

1:30-Boys Non Public B

2:00-Girls Group 4

2:30-Girls Group 1

3:00-Boys Group 4

3:30-Boys Group 1

MEET OF CHAMPIONS (Nov. 23 at Holmdel Park)

PARKING-Is permitted at Holmdel Park

RACE SKED

11:00-Girls race

11:45-Boys race

STATE RANKINGS

BOYS TOP 20

- 1-Christian Brothers
- 2-West Windsor South
- 3-Haddonfield
- 4-Middletown North
- 5-Don Bosco Prep
- 6-Cherry Hill East
- 7-South Brunswick
- 8-Millburn
- 9-Westfield
- 10-Holmdel
- 11-Hillsborough
- 12-Delbarton
- 13-Summit
- 14-Indian Hills
- 15-Chatham
- 16-Morristown
- 17-Highland
- 18-Old Tappan
- 19-Ridgewood
- 20-St. Peter's Prep

STATE RANKINGS

GIRLS TOP 20

- 1-Red Bank Catholic
- 2-Randolph
- 3-Rumson
- 4-West Windsor South
- 5-Haddonfield
- 6-Shawnee
- 7-Hillsborough
- 8-Millburn
- 9-North Hunterdon
- 10-Westfield
- 11-Mount Olive
- 12-West Morris
- 13-Middletown South
- 14-Freehold Township
- 15-Ridgewood
- 16-Jackson
- 17-Ridge
- 18-Toms River North
- 19-Mount St. Dominic
- 20-Ocean City

Good luck to everyone competing at the State Group Championships on Saturday at Holmdel Park!!

I hope you all run PR's.

Happy trails!!!

GET UR MORRIS COUNTY XC ON!!!