

MORRIS COUNTY REWIND

Here is a look back at what happened this week and a look ahead at the state relays, which will run this Thursday (Jan. 16) through Sunday at the Bennett Center in Toms River.

RAMS CLOSING IN ON SOME RECORDS

Randolph's 4x400 relay, which won the county relay title, dropped a 3:28.20 to place second at the Molloy Stanner Games last Saturday at the New Balance Track and Field Center. That time is No. 5 in New Jersey this season and No. 26 nationally. Randolph is chasing the school record of 3:25.80 set in 2007.

Also at the Stanner Games, Randolph's **Anthony Zarro** soared 21-5 ³/₄ to place second in the long jump.

Randolph splits

Stephen Nalbach-53.2

Dan Leanza-52.0

Nick Ciccaglione-52.0

Collin McAlmont-50.6

ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

Keturah Orji of Mount Olive was chosen as the track and field Athlete of the Week by The Star-Ledger this week.

Here is the profile on Orji by Brian Deakyne.

JUST THE STATS: Orji helped Mount Olive outscore defending champion Mendham, 47 1/2-42, to capture its first Morris County Relay title in 17 years on Jan. 6 at Drew University in Madison. She anchored the winning 4x200 (meet record 1:49.13) with a 25.8 split, ran 59.5 on the runner-up SMR, and anchored the winning the 4x400 with a 62.1 split.

Orji, a University of Georgia committ and two-time triple jump national champion, ran her leg of the sprint medley in 59.5 as Mount Olive placed second.

ON HELPING MOUNT OLIVE WIN THE MORRIS COUNTY RELAYS: "We were really surprised because we've had a lot of injuries this year. But, we were really excited to win, even with those injuries and when we found out how long it had been since we had actually won, it just made it that much better."

ON GOALS FOR THE STATE RELAYS: "We know those meets are going to be a lot more competitive (than Morris County Relays). We get pushed a lot differently, and we

know we're going to be pushed hard from teams like Winslow and Teaneck that are in our group."

PERSONAL BESTS:

55-meter dash: 7.13

200-meter dash: 24.67

400-meter run: 58.03

Long jump: 20-11 3/4

Triple Jump: 44-11 (state record and No. 2 in U.S. history)

ON TRAINING HEADING INTO THE WINTER SEASON: "We actually didn't get to train too much because there was a lot of snow covering the track. Most of our workouts were in the parking lot or the basement of the school, so we couldn't get a lot of long workouts in. We did a bunch of short sprints and workouts like that."

HOW DID YOU GET INTO TRACK: "I started freshman year after I quit gymnastics, but I knew I was athletic enough to be good at something else. I started long jumping in the spring of my freshman year and it wasn't until my sophomore year that I even tried the triple jump. I really didn't know anything about track, I thought it was only about running."

HIGHLIGHT OF CAREER SO FAR: Earning two medals at the IAAF World Youth Championships in Ukraine last July. "That was so great and it was something that I never even imagined. I was really excited about that."

BREAKTHROUGH PERFORMANCE: Becoming a New Balance Indoor national champion last winter (triple jump).

GREATEST STRENGTH: "From gymnastics, my coaches always tell me that I have springy legs and the combination of that and speed really help me," in the triple jump.

FAVORITE MOVIE: "Rush Hour"

FAVORITE T.V. SHOW: "Monk"

FAVORITE TRACK ATHLETE: Will Claye

TRADING PLACES: Beyonce. "I like her a lot; she's my favorite singer."

PRESIDENT FOR A DAY: "I would get rid of the 400-meter for track."

IN 10 YEARS: "I'd like to participate in the World Junior Championships, World Championships, and the Olympics, and medal at all of them. I hope to graduate college and be married, maybe."

PICKING GEORGIA: Orji announced her plans to attend Georgia in December. "I liked the coaching at all the schools I visited, but Georgia really stuck out to me. I got along with the rest of the team really well when I was visiting and I felt like I really liked the school a lot. I also wanted to go somewhere with warmer weather than New Jersey."

STATE RELAYS

SCHEDULE

ALL MEETS WILL BE HELD AT THE BENNETT CENTER IN TOMS RIVER

THURSDAY, JAN. 16-BOYS GROUP 4, 4 PM

FRIDAY, JAN. 17-GIRLS GROUP 4, 4 P.M.

SATURDAY, JAN. 18-BOYS AND GIRLS GROUP 3, 9 A.M.

SATURDAY, JAN. 18-BOYS AND GIRLS GROUP 1, 4 P.M.

SUNDAY, JAN. 19-BOYS AND GIRLS GROUP 2, 9 A.M.

SUNDAY, JAN. 19-BOYS AND GIRLS NON PUBLIC A AND B, 4 P.M

A HISTORY OF ALL THE PAST TEAM CHAMPIONS IS HERE- <http://www.njsiaa.org/sites/default/files/document/13wthistoryrelaychamps.pdf>

ORDER OF EVENTS ARE HERE - <http://www.njsiaa.org/sites/default/files/document/14%20bgwintrk%20Rev%2012-16.pdf>

STATE RELAY PREVIEW

Morris Hills coach Sean Robinson feels his team has the talent to win its first state relay title since 2008, but also knows his team needs to be near flawless to come out on top in Group 2.

“A lot can happen in these meets,” said Robinson. “Three great performances can be torn down in a hurry by one poor one. We are capable, but like every other team, all members of the relay teams must bring it.”

Another boys team that should be in contention is **Morristown** in Group 3. The Colonials have a great stable of distance runners, led by **Sean Lyons**, and will try to win the DM and 4x800. Moristown comes in as the No. 1 seed in the 4x800 (8:05.73) and is No. 2 in the DM (10:43.28). As for the team title, coach Paul Buccino knows it's a long shot against such great teams.

“The goal is to keep improving and be in the hunt to win them (the DM and 4x800) both,” said Buccino. As a team, it's all Timber Creek, but don't forget Kingsway. Will be fun.”

Also keep an eye on the top seeded **Madison** boys shuttle hurdle team in Group 1. Madison has run 31.31, tops in Group 1 and No. 3 in the state this season.

In the girls competition, **Villa Walsh** will try to make it two in a row in Non Public B while a bunch of Morris County teams should be in the mix in Group 3. Among them are Mount Olive, Mendham, West Morris and Randolph.

HERE'S A LOOK AT WHAT GROUPS THE MORRIS COUNTY TEAMS ARE IN

GROUP 4: Morris Knolls

GROUP 3: Mount Olive, Morristown, Mendham, West Morris, Randolph, Roxbury

GROUP 2: Dover, Chatham, Jefferson, Parsippany, Parsippany Hills, Hanover Park, Morris Hills, Madison

GROUP 1: Whippany Park, Kinnelon, Butler

NON PUBLIC A: Delbarton

NON PUBLIC B: Villa Walsh

MORRIS COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIPS

The **40th Morris County Championships** are set for this Wednesday at 4:30 p.m. at Drew University in Madison. The **Morristown boys** will seek to win its second straight title while **Mendham** is the defending girls champion.

Morristown will rely on its deep stable of distance runners. County relay champion **Delbarton** counters with a balanced attack, county relay runner-up **Randolph** brings a strong group of sprinters and has a great jumper in Anthony Zarro, and **Mendham** and **Chatham** each have a nice mix of talent on the track and in the field. And **Morris Hills** is always in the hunt.

The girls meet will feature distance strong **Mendham, Mount Olive**, which has a good mix of sprinters and distance runners, much improved **West Morris**, and always tough **Randolph and Morris Hills**.

HANKO MAY NOT RUN THIS SEASON

Josiah Hanko of Trinity Christian, who was diagnosed with Lyme disease after the cross-country season, is still not ready to resume racing yet and he may not compete this indoor season.

"Any indoor competition is uncertain at this time," said Trinity Christian coach Brian Lee.

The Duke-bound Hanko, one of the state's top distance runners, got checked out after having issues with his health in his last two races of the XC season.

After winning his second straight state Non Public B XC title in 15:39 on Nov. 16 Holmdel Park, it was obvious something wasn't right with Hanco at the Meet of Champions the following week.

Hanco got light headed and began wobbling over the final 400 meters at the Meet of Champions. He eventually collapsed right before the finish line and valiantly crawled across the line in ninth place. He was treated in an ambulance for over an hour after the race.

Hanco tried to race at the Foot Locker Northeast Regional the week after the M of C, but he was simply not healthy and dropped out near the midway point.

I look forward to seeing Josiah get back on the track when he's ready to go.

KEEPING TRACK

The **Mountain Lakes boys** had a big day at the **Cliff Back Invitational** last Saturday at Drew University as **Adam Franklin** won two races and **Ben DeVenezia** also grabbed a gold.

Franklin won the 55 dash in 6.72 (a PR of 6.70 in the trials) and the 300 in a PR of 37.35. DeVenezia crossed first in the 1,600 in 4:35.57.

In other highlights, Madison's **Mat Franklin** won the 55 hurdles in 7.89 (PR of 7.88 in the trials), junior **Christian Kildal-Brandt** of Mendham won the 400 in a meet record 51.37. **Sean Lyons** of Morristown won the 3,200 with a PR of 9:29.17. **Rudy Torres** of Morristown won the 600 in 1:24.32. **Spencer Clouse** of Mendham won the high jump (6-4).

In the shot put, **Ethan Kraemer** of Mount Olive was first with a a PR of 51/4 ³/₄, **Tommy Rhodes** of Delbarton, who had been out with a knee injury, was second in his season debut (51-4), and junior **Alex Rodgers** of Montville was third with a 50-0 ¹/₂.

In the girls competition at the Cliff Back meet, **Brennan Sharkey** of West Morris won the 3,200 with a meet record 11:16.33. **Keturah Orji** won the 55 dash in a meet record 7.34 and win the 300 in 42.30. Randolph sophomore **Elly Scherer** won the 55 hurdles in 8.66 (PR of 8.59 in the trials). **Ally Schlosser** of Parsippany won the 1,600 (5:28.73), **Mackenzie Barry** of Mendham was first in the 1,000 (3:10.32), **Helene Rowland** of Madison won the shot put (38-3 1/2), and **Sierra Tonnesen** of Mendham won the 400 in 61.62.