

MORRIS COUNTY REWIND

To say it was a great week for Morris County track and field would be a colossal understatement. It was one for the ages!!!

The performances that took place at last Thursday's **Morris County Championships** and this past Saturday's **New Balance Games** were some of the most exciting and memorable moments in recent county history.

In case you missed it, **four Morris County records** were smashed by **Keturah Orji of Mount Olive, Christian Kildal-Brandt of Mendham, the Randolph boys sprint medley team, and Brendan Kenny of Delbarton.**

In addition, the **Randolph boys** won the county title in dramatic fashion by one point, and the **West Morris girls**, led by **Kylene Cochrane's** remarkable triple, captured its first county championship. And there were a bunch of first time champions crowned at the county meet.

Here's a look back all the great highlights!!

AIR ORJI SOARS IN NEW YORK

Keturah Orji of Mount Olive, the No. 1 high school horizontal jumper in the nation, put on a remarkable show by soaring a meet record 20-8 3/4, which places her No. 5 on the national all-time list, to finish first and earn the Girls Field Event Athlete of the Meet Award at the New Balance Games on Saturday at the New Balance Track and Field Center in N.Y.

Not bad for her first jumping competition of the season.

Orji's 20-8 3/4 is the longest long jump indoors by a high school athlete since Shana Woods of Long Beach Poly in California went 20-10 in 2005. It's also placed Orji No. 2 jump in New Jersey indoor history behind legendary Carol Lewis of Willingboro, who set the national indoor record of 21-7 1/2 in 1981.

As a junior last year, the Georgia-bound Orji won the New Balance Indoor and New Balance outdoor national titles in the triple jump, and then at the IAAF World Youth Championships in the Ukraine last July, she finished third in the TJ with a PR and state outdoor record of 44-11, tied for No. 2 in U.S. history, and placed second in the LJ with a 20-11 3/4, No. 2 in N.J. outdoor history.

Orji has a great shot to become the first girl in U.S. history (indoors or outdoors) to hit the 45 foot mark in the triple jump!!!

Orji's LJ victory in New York capped a great week for the versatile star. She also won the 55 dash and the 300 at the county meet two days before the New Balance meet.

HERE'S A LIST OF THE TOP 5 LONG JUMPERS IN U.S. HIGH SCHOOL HISTORY

21-7 1/2 - Carol Lewis, Willingboro, 1981

21-4 3/4-Kathy McMillan, Hoke County, Raeford, N.C, 1976

21-1 1/4-Keyon Soley, Uniondale, N.Y., 1997

20-10-Shana Woods, Poly, Long Beach, Calif., 2005

20-8 3/4-Keturah Orji, Mount Olive, 2014

ROCKET START

Brendan Kenny of Delbarton got out of the blocks so fast in the 55 dash at the Moris County Championships that many people felt he must have jumped the gun. But the starter and referee both felt it was clean, and Kenny, who exploded like a cork being shot out of champagne bottle, sprinted into the history books when he stopped the clock at 6.54 to break the meet, county and Drew University facility records.

Kenny, a junior, broke the county and facility record of 6.56 set in 2002 by Jeff Camacho of Parsippany. The former meet record of 6.67 was set in 2000 by Jeff Sokolowski of Butler.

"I never even thought running that fast was possible," Kenny said. "I just wanted to get in the 6.6's for first time. When I heard my time I was shocked. Then to find out it's a county record is even more unbelievable."

Kenny said the start is always the key to a fast time.

"I know that the best place to make up time in the 55 is at the start, so I tried to time it just right," Kenny said. "I was afraid I may have false started, but I wasn't going to stop. My brother (Kieran) did that once. He thought he false started, so he stopped. Then everyone ran past him. I learned from that. Always keep going."

What made Kenny's performance even more impressive is that he had been out for a few meets with what he thought was a sore left Achilles. But it was something else.

"I have an extra bone in my foot," said Kenny, who has already decided to join his brother on the Villanova lacrosse team after he graduates next year. "I also had an extra bone in my right foot, but I had that removed a few years ago. I just thought I had a sore Achilles in my left foot, but they found another bone in that foot also. It only really hurts when I have to cut on it."

Kenny may postpone having the bone removed.

"I think I may just wait until after the state meets so I can see what I can do," said Kenny.

“Even if I wait, I shouldn't miss that much of the lacrosse season.”

THREE LAPS INTO HISTORY

Junior **Christian Kildal-Brandt** of Mendham, the county 600 champion, stayed undefeated on the season when he won the 600 in a Morris County automatic time record of 1:20.50, the No. 2 time in the nation this season.

Kildal-Brandt's 1:20.50 broke the county automatic time record of 1:22.23 set in 2005 by Mendham's Marcel Van Eeden. Van Eeden still has the county overall record with his hand time of 1:20.1 from 2005.

The only runner in the nation that has run faster this season in the 600 than Kildal-Brandt is Richard Rose of Boys and Girls in New York, who has gone 1:29.20.

SPRINT MEDLEY RECORD GOES DOWN

The county record in the boys sprint medley relay of 3:38.4 had stood for 27 years since Morristown ran that time at the state relays.

But it finally fell this past Saturday when Randolph placed fourth in the SMR at the New Balance Invitational in New York in 3:35.95, the No. 8 time in the nation this season.

The four runners for Randolph were **Stephen Nalbach (51.0)**, **Collin McAlmont (23.0)**, **Nick Ciccaglione (23.2)** and **Greg Stickle (1:58.5)**.

“We decided to go to the New Balance Games solely to run the sprint medley relay in the hopes of breaking the county record, or at least our school record,” said McAlmont.

“Our coaches have been telling us that we are capable of doing it all season, and to finally break the record felt great. We knew that we had the talent to do it, and with the great competition at that meet we knew we would run fast that day.”

COCHRANE'S TRIPLE LEADS TO HISTORIC VICTORY

Kylene Cochrane put together a remarkable performance at the Morris County Championships, winning three races and breaking a meet record to spark West Morris to its first ever girls title, 58-51 over defending champion Mendham.

Cochrane, a senior, won the 1,600 in 5:03.83 and the 600 in 1:38.74 before coming back to win the 1,000 in the final 100 meters as she passed **Randolph's Liz Wellman** to win the race in a meet-record 2:56.51, No. 6 in the nation this season. The former meet record of 2:59.44, set by Randolph's Joelle Amaral in 2011.

Brennan Sharkey (3,200) and **Marlena Paz** (pole vault) also came big for West Morris with a second place finishes.

WILD 4x400 DECIDES TEAM TITLE

The battle for the boys team title at the Morris County Championships produced a thrilling and dramatic conclusion.

Defending champion Morristown led Randolph, 45-40, heading into the meet-concluding 4x400 relay.

Randolph won the 4x400 in 3:32.01, so Morristown needed to finish third or better to keep its title. But Morristown was edged right at the line for third place by Mount Olive, 3:35.38 to 3:35.42. Morristown's fourth place finish gave Randolph a heart-pounding 50-49 over Morristown.

It's the first championship for Randolph since winning a second straight in 2011.

"We knew we had to win the relay and then hope that some teams beat Morristown to win the meet," said **Randolph senior Collin McAlmont**, who split 52.9 on the anchor leg of the 4x400. "It was a wild meet, and we came through at the end."

Randolph looked like it was too far behind Morristown and Delbarton to finish first, but it mounted a furious charge to finish on top.

The comeback started when McAlmont finished first (37.42) and teammate **Stephen Nalbach** second (37.45) in the 300. Then **Anthony Zarro** made 6-4 to get second in the high jump for Randolph to set the stage for the thrilling 4x400.

"We knew we could score a lot of points in that 300, and after we got that 1-2 we started to feel like we had a chance," McAlmont said.

WALSH HAS CAREER DAY

Senior **John Walsh** of Chatham certainly rose to the occasion at the Morris County Championships, clearing a personal best 6-4 to win the high jump and running 7.94 to place second in the 55 hurdles.

BIG SHOT

There was a lot of drama in the boys shot put at the county meet.

Junior Alex Rodgers of Montville unloaded a personal best and school record 52-0 ½ on his final attempt to edge **Tommy Rhodes of Delbarton** by a quarter of an inch. Rhodes had a 52-0 ¼ on his next to last throw.

"This is amazing," Rodgers said. "I didn't even think I would medal at this meet, so to win it is just unbelievable. I still can't believe it."

Rodgers got himself psyched up before his dramatic final throw.

"It's the county championships, so there is no holding back," Rodgers said. "So I just told myself to give it my all on that final throw. When I found out that I win I was shocked." .

LAKERS GO THE DISTANCE

Senior **Chris Luciano** and junior **Ben DeVenezia** of Mountain Lakes each scored a win at the county meet. Luciano won the 3,200 in 9:33.81 and DeVenezia crossed first in the 1,000 in 2:37.38. Senior **Adam Franklin** also made his presence felt by placing second in the 55 dash in 6.65.

MENDHAM CONTINUES STREAK

The **Mendham** girls continued its impressive streak in the girls 4x400 by running 4:09.36 to capture that race for the sixth straight year at the county championships.

KEEPING TRACK

The Morris County Championships were filled with first time county champions, including **Madison's Dylan Anderson**, who got a great start on his way to victory in the 55 hurdles in a personal best 7.84, the top time in the county this season.

“The last few meets I haven't gotten the best starts, so today I leaned forward a little more and I was able to get out very fast,” Anderson said. “I didn't see anyone out of the corners of my eyes and then I was able to stay in front the whole way. It's a great feeling to be a county champion. I have worked so hard for this.”

Mike and Monica Benz pulled off a brother-sister sweep of the pole vault at the county meet. Mike, a senior at Delbarton, captured the boys title by clearing 14-0. Monica, a junior at Villa Walsh, cleared 11-6 to win the girls title.

Sean Lyons of Morristown had a great performance at the Morris County meet, winning the 1,600 in 4:26.91, placing second in the 3,200 and anchoring the fourth place 4x400.

Helene Rowland of Madison won the girls shot put with a 38-3 ¼.

Randolph sophomore **Elly Scherer** won the 55 hurdles in 8.69, and sophomore **Leah Wis** of Montville cleared 5-2 to win the high jump. **Mackenzie Barry** of Mendham repeated as champion in the 3,200 in 10:58.91.

PARSIPPANY REPORT

Parsippany coach Walt Bleuler filed this report on his team.

“We have had a busy couple weeks. The girls had a record day at the State Relays in Group 2 with a school record in the DMR. Teammates were Sam Pignatelli in the 1,200 leg in 4:01, Bria Saunders in 59.5, Jen Mylnar in 2:31, and the anchor Ally Schlosser in

5:18. The old school record was from 2001 with Kim Pereira on the anchor. The team placed fifth in this race. In the SMR, we placed 6th with Bria, Jen, Gabby Rachmaciej and Ally Schlosser in 2:27 for a time of 4:28.

``At the Morris County Championships, the girls placed 4th in tough competition. Bria Saunders placed 2nd in the 55 in 7.47 and 2nd in the 300 in 42.71. Ally Schlosser was 3rd in the 1600 in 5:19 and 3rd in the 1000. Haley Pignatelli was 6th in the 3200 in 11:52, and the 4x400 placed 4th in 4:16 with Bria , Jen, Megan Wisineski, and Amanda Angulo.

``The boys had a school record in the SMR at Group 2 Relays with a time of 3:46.5, breaking a record held by the 2000 team that included Jon Pereria and Ambar Patel. The teammates on the record breaking SMR were Malik Francis in 54.2, Josh Crawford in 24.5, Christian Hulse in 25.2, Peter Hernandez in 2:04.

At the county meet the lone individual scorer for the boys was Malik Francis, sixth in the 55 hurdles in 8:17. The boys 4x4 team placed 5th in a time of 3:36. The 4x400 was made up of Malik Francis- 55.2, Christian Hulse-55.5, Aaron Wood-53.4, and Peter Hernandez-54.2. The Red Hawks are looking forward to the sectional meet with the girls shooting for a title while the boys will be looking to gain points in several areas and hoping to have members advance the the group meet."

COMING UP

Many teams and athletes from Morris County will travel to the New Balance Track and Field Center in New York on Wednesday, Jan. 29 for the Metropolitan Invitational.

Then it's on to the state sectionals. All state sectional meets will be held at the Bennett Center in Toms River.

NJSIAA Sectional Schedule

Friday, Jan. 31-Central Jersey, Groups 1 and 2, 3:45 p.m.

Saturday, Feb. 1-South Jersey, Groups 1 and 2, 9 a.m.

Saturday, Feb. 1-North Jersey, Sec. 2 Groups 1 and 2, 3:30 p.m.

Sunday, Feb. 2-North Jersey, Sec. 1 Groups 1 and 2, 9 a.m.

Friday, Feb. 7-Central Jersey, Groups 3 and 4, 3:45 p.m.

Saturday, Feb. 8-South Jersey, Groups 3 and 4, 9 a.m.

Saturday, Feb. 8-North Jersey, Sec. 2 Groups 3 and 4, 3:30 p.m.

Sunday, Feb. 9-North Jersey, Sec. 1 Group 3 and 4, 9 a.m.