

CROSS-COUNTRY PREVIEW

BOYS

There is, of course, no question as to who will win the boys' all-group team title this fall as defending state and national champ Christian Brothers goes into the season with five boys who ran under 9:20 for 3200M last spring. Nor is there much doubt who will be the state's No. 1 runner with Footlocker winner Edward Cheserek returning for his senior season at St. Benedict's.

With Cheserek ineligible for the AG individual title, however, that crown will be a little more wide open, though Ben Malone of Pascack Valley, who finished third a year ago at Holmdel enters the season as a probably favorite over outdoor AG 3200 champ Jack Boyle of CBA, Shawn Wilson of Cherokee and Matt Nelson of Barnegat, among others.

Here, as usual, is a look at a possible Top Ten team and 25 leading individuals, both in alphabetical order.

TEAMS

CHRISTIAN BROTHERS: Boyle is joined in the Colts' top group by juniors Matt McClemons and Tom Rooney, the major find of last outdoor season, and senior Billy Bragg and Aaron Liberatore. With the state title a lead-pipe cinch, the team goal is to be the first school to repeat as national champion.

DON BOSCO PREP: Graduation hit heavily here, but the Ironmen had a deep squad last fall. They will be led by juniors Kyle Levermore and Michael Higgins, with much help from a solid group of sophomores.

FREEHOLD TWP: The Patriots have the unhappy chores of facing CBA every time they turn around this fall except in the state sectionals and group meet where they run into West Windsor-Plainsboro South, probably the No. 2 team. Junior Kyle Tarpey and senior Kevin Summon- te provide a solid 1-2 punch.

MENDHAM: The defending Gr. III champs retain two key members that team in junior Justin Naselli and sophomore Paul Ehmann and had a 2-3-4-5 finish in last year's county JV race, plus a couple of top freshmen.

MORRIS HILLS: A close second to Mendham in the county meet last fall and effectively tied for second in Gr. II, the Knights bring back all but one of their top five, led by Travis Ellis, Robert Biro and Matt Weintraub.

POPE JOHN: The Lions have one of the state's top trios in Chris Hatler, Peter Spinks and junior Scott Meehan. Their 2nd-place finish with a B team at the opening Randolph Invitational indicates that there is plenty of depth.

RIDGEWOOD: Storm Dublirer and Nick Salamone head a veteran team which placed 7th in the AG meet last fall after winning the NJ 1 sectionals and placing 3rd in Gr. IV.

WALLKILL VALLEY: The Rangers got off to a good start with an easy win at the Randolph Invitational, This is virtually the same team that tied with Morris Hills for 2nd in Gr. II last fall, led by the Corti Brothers, Craig and Jim, and Ryan Chiesa, all of whom will be around for another year.

WESTFIELD: The perennial Union County power hardly ever misses the AG meet has the state's largest team and will be in contention again this year led by junior Matt Luppino and Kevin Smith. The Blue Devils have a three-year run in Gr. IV.

WEST WINDSOR-PLAINSBORO SOUTH: Twins Jake and Dan Riff head this team which will give Westfield a run in Gr. IV this year. George Hamilton provides a solid third, so the title will probably be decided in the fourth and fifth spots.

INDIVIDUALS

ANDY ADAMOVICS, Montgomery (28): Andy got his season off to a good start with an easy win at the Randolph Invitational. Basically a CC runner, he hit 9:34.73 in the 3200 last spring.

JACK BOYLE, CBA (20): The surprise winner of the AG 3200 title last spring in 9:08.28, Boyle ran 16:14 last fall at Holmdel and was a key factor for the Colts in their national championship victory.

BILLY BRAGG, CBA (15): A star since freshman year, Bragg ran 16:06 in the AG last fall and followed up with a great spring, hitting 4:18.29 in the 1600 and 9:17.15 in the 3200.

EDWARD CHESEREK, St. Benedict's: What else can be said about this lad who has rewritten the state record book and set new records at just about every major CC course in the Metropolitan area, including Holmdel and Van Cortlandt. His marks on the track last year included a 4:02.21 mile and 8:43.16 2M indoors and a 15:578.04 5K and 29:42.31 10K outdoors.

ISAAC & JACOB CLARK, Pleasantville: Ran their best CC races last fall on relatively flat course, finishing 3-4 behind Matt Nelson and Steve Maine in the SJ sectionals. Their track credentials are awesome: Jacob running a 1:52.9 800 and 1 4:17.37 1600 outdoors and Isaac a 1:52.69 800.

NICK COSTELLO, Delsea (30): Fourth in both his sectional and group races last fall, Costello ran 16:21 in the AG race and clocked 9:19.19 for the 3200 last spring. Should give Wilson a battle for top SJ man this fall.

TRAVIS ELLIS, Morris Hills (27): One of the more versatile runners in the state, Ellis ran 16:21 at Holmdel last fall and had marks of 1:53.91 for 800 and 4:16.54 for 1600 last spring.

CHRIS HATLER, Pope John (19): Another boy who can run anything from 800 to 5K, Chris clocked 16:12 at the AG last fall and then ran 1:53.44 for 800 and 4:12.34 for 1600 last spring.

AARON LIBERATORE, CBA (40): The solid No. 6 boy for the Colts last fall, Aaron ran 16:31 at the AG meet and then really stepped up things last spring with a 4:18.89 1600 and 9:13.11 3200.

KYLE LEVERMORE, Don Bosco (25): Part of last year's great group of sophomore distance runners, Kyle was regularly No. 2 for the second-place Don Bosco team, running 16:20 at the AG meet. He then clocked 4:18.51 for 1600 and 9:17.61 for 3200 last spring.

MIKE MCCLEMENS, CBA (12): Led the sophs in the AG meet at 15:59—one of the fastest ever for that class at Holmdel—then ran 4:20.08 for 1600 indoors and 9:15.95 for 3200 outdoors despite some leg problems.

STEVE MAINE, Highland (32): Another of the 2011 soph group, Steve ran 16:25 in the AG race and had a 9:24.33 for 3200 outdoors. Another to watch for top SJ runner this fall.

BEN MALONE, Pascack Valley (3): A brilliant junior year was topped by his indoor national 800M title at 1:49.94 and a 2:23.56 for 1K, second only to Robbie Andrews' national record. He ran 15:40 in the AG race, then won the outdoor AG title in a slow-paced 1:50.70 and ran 4:07.02 for 1600.

CHRIS MARCO, Toms River South (43): Really came into his own last spring as he won the AG 1600 in a MR 4:07.33, as well as running 1:52.33 for 800 and 9:25.29 for 3200.

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LIAM MULLETT, Pingry (26): Still another of last fall's sophomore stars, Liam won the Parochial B title in 16:38, then chopped eight seconds off that in the AG race. He had a fine outdoor campaign, running the 3200M in 9:15.95.

ROB NAPOLITANO, Red Bank Catholic: A fine junior campaign saw him run 16:30 for 8th in the Parochial A race, then come back in the spring with a 4:12.16 in the 1600 and an 8:51.38 in the Penn 3K.

MATT NELSON, Barnegat (11): Nelson had his junior year interrupted with injuries after running 15:58 in the AG race and going under 9:20 for the 3200 three times indoors with a best of 9:14.33. He had an 8:53.20 in the Penn 3K, but missed the next month and was not at his best when he returned for the state meet.

THOMAS O'NEILL, Middletown So.: Another of 2011's soph group, O'Neill was 4th in the CJ race and ran 9:22.73 for 3200 outdoors. He opened his 2012 season with a 2nd to Adamovics at the Randolph Invitational.

JAKE (21) & DAN (23) RIFF, WW-Plainsboro So.: Both twins came down with injuries at the end of the cross-country campaign, but still managed to make the top 25 at the AG meet, Jake running 16:14 and dan 16:18. They missed most of indoors, but returned midway in the outdoor campaign, running 9:11.57 and 9:16.55, respectively, for 3200 and 4:17.02 and 4:19.11 for 1600.

TOM ROONEY, CBA: Only a JV runner last fall, Rooney surfaced with a 9:35.58 late in the indoor campaign, then exploded with a 9:11.58 3200 win at one of the Holmdel twilight races outdoors. He didn't get to run in the state meet, however.

KEVIN SUMMONTE, Freehold Twp (24): One of that breed known as a "pure cross-country runner," Summonte hit 16:19 at the AG meet, but could do no better than 9:34.77 for the 3200 outdoors.

DYLAN TARPEY, Freehold Twp (14): Perhaps the most consistent of last year's sophomore group, Tarpey ran 16:05 in the AG race last fall, then followed with a 4:16.27 1600 and a 9:13.23 3200 outdoors.

SHAWN WILSON, Cherokee (5): The No. 2 underclassman in last year's AG race, Wilson placed 2nd to AG champ Tim Ball of Piscataway in the Gr. IV race at 16:03 and then ran a 15:45 in the AG race. He followed this with a 4:18.50 1600 indoors and a 9:14.41 3200 outdoors.

GIRLS

Unlike the boys, there is no clear favorite for the girls' AG team title which, as has become customary in the last few years, has four of five schools entering the season with high hopes of being crown as champion at Holmdel on Nov. 17.

Rumson is the defender, having won its first title last year in a meet which saw only 40 points separating the top six schools. (In contrast, CBA took the boys' race by 66 points from Don Bosco). The Bulldogs have most of that team returning, led again by Rachel Christ.

But the same can be said for runner-up Voorhees and Hillsborough, which took close races in 2009 and 2010. Others in the mix include Lenape, Ridge and Randolph, which might have been the favorite had not spring find Liz Lansing decided to stick with soccer this fall.

The individual race is also a crowded affair, led by the 3-4 finishers from last fall, Mackenzie Barry of Mendham and Marisa Ruskan of Bridgewater, and including 11 more of the top 20 finishers from 2011.

TEAMS

BERNARDS: The once perennial contenders lost their top hand, Dana Giordano, to graduation, but have retained three of the top five

from a team that was a fairly close 3rd to Rumson and Voorhees in last fall's Gr. II race: Laura Quintana, Sarah Gunson and Zoe Wojtech, two of whom ran under 5:06 for 1600 last spring.

HUNTERDON CENTRAL: Four of the top six from last fall's 7th-place AG finishers return, led by Kaitlyn Bedard and Emma Soretntino. As usual, the Red Devils will be up against Voorhees or Hillsboro (and sometimes both) at every turn this fall except the state sectionals.

LENAPE: Due mainly to injuries, the 2011 season was a somewhat disappointing one fir the Indians, but things could be very different this fall with virtually the entire team returning, led by Natalie Ocasio, Emily Mcgee, Camille Franklin and Amanda Restivo.

MENDHAM: Once again, the Minutemen have a solid top trio in Barry, Abby Seel and Reagan Kolakowski, but have to find two more to go with them, something they couldn't do the last two years,

MT. OLIVE: Marissa Karl heads a veteran team which will have the difficult task of facing Mendham in every outing this fall, as well as Randolph in everything but the state sectionals and groups. The Marauders opened with a 3rd to Ridge and Randolph at the latter's invitational, but were without 2011 frosh star Sarah Masukiewicz.

MT. ST. DOMINIC: After a brilliant 2011 campaign, topped by a 3rd in the AG meet, the Mountain Lions come back with a young team, headed by Essex County champ Amanda Corbosiero and sophs Sarah Workman and Caroline Haskins.

RANDOLPH: The absence of Lansing cost the Rams a victory at their opening meet as Carole Harsch, Liz Wellman and Margaret Thomson gave them a solid lead over Ridge up front. This is a team to watch next fall, however, as the top four will all return and Lansing might just be "converted" by then.

RIDGE: The Red Devils got off to a good start with a 93-110 win over Randolph at the latter's invitational. Sophomore Liz Newman and Chloe O'Malley led this one with a 5-6 finish. This is a young team with O'Malley the only senior in the top five.

RUMSON: The defending champs have five of the top seven back from last year, led by Christ, soph Hannah Anderson and Michaela Irvine.

VOORHEES: The Vikings lost Gr. II to Rumson last fall by only seven points, but then had a disastrous AG meet. All seven runner return this time, determined to regain the No. 1 position, led by Nisa Cicitta, Clarissa Modde and Brigid McGill.

INDIVIDUALS

VICKI AJIMOKO, Williamstown (31): One of the strong sophomore group a year ago, Vicki ran 19:26 at the AG meet after placing in the top five, against strong competition in her conference, county and sectional races.

MACKENZIE BARRY, Mendham (3): This second generation star--her mother is her coach now--had a brilliant sophomore season with wins at conference, sectional and group meets in addition to her 18:21 in the AG race. She continued to star on the track, running 4:58.30 for 1600 and 10:18.24 to win the outdoor AG 3200 title.

KAITLYN BEDARD, Hunterdon Central: Just missed the top 50 at the AG last fall after finishing 8th in Gr. IV in 19:27. Hit 5:05.14 for thr 1600 last spring and opened her senior CC season with a 4th in the A race at the Randolph Invitational.

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SHELBY CAIN, Haddonfield (18): The No. 2 soph in the AG race, Cain clocked 19:08 there after running 18:41 for 3rd in the Gr. II race a week earlier.

RACHEL CHRIST, Rumson (9): It took a little while for Christ to get her season going last fall, but once she did, there was no stopping her, as she won her county and sectional races and placed 5th in the strong Gr. II field before running 18:35 in the AG meet. She then clocked 5:00.31 in the 1600 outdoors.

NISA CICITTA, Voorhees (17): After she missed the 2012 outdoor season with injuries, there were questions about Nisa's condition for this fall, but she seemed in form as she placed 2nd in the opening Petty Run. Last fall, she ran 18:41 in the Gr. II race, before showing signs of her leg troubles with her 19:17 in the AG race. She had an 11:07.63 indoor 3200 before retiring for the year.

KYLENE COCHRANE, West Morris: Made the AG last fall with a 10th in the Gr. III race at 19:41, then had a big spring with a 2:14.22 in the 800 and 3rd place in the AG 1600 at 4:53.88.

AMANDA CORBOSIERO, Mt. St. Dominic (22): It was an up and down sophomore season for Amanda who followed victories in her conference and county meets with an indifferent record in the states. It was the same on the track where her best was an indoor 11:02.59 in the 3200.

SARAH DECKER, Watchung Hills (37): Strictly a solo runner, as most Watchung Hills stars are, Sarah had a solid season last fall with a 19:35 in the AG race and a 19:44 for 6th in Gr. IV.

SARAH DISANZA, High Pt. (11): Got her senior year under way with a bang as she ran away with the B race at the Randolph Invitational in 18:22. Her junior year was all gold as she ran 18L37 in the AG meet and followed up outdoors with marks of 5:03.39 in the 1600 and 10:54.31 in the 3200.

CLAUDIA DISOMMA, Sparta (12): Sarah's rival for domination in Sussex County was right behind her in the AG last year, also in 18:37, in her first CC season, then ran a 4:54.13 1600 outdoors after missing the first month of the season with injuries.

CAROLE HARSCH, Randolph (26): A great freshman year was capped by her first frosh finish at the AG meet in 19:23. Outdoors, she had to play second fiddle to Lansing, who won the AG 1600 in 4:51.05. Harsch opened her soph CC season with a 3rd in the Randolph A race.

KELLY JANOKOWICZ, Hillsboro (10): A brilliant junior year saw Kelly run 18:35 at the AG met and follow it up outdoors with a 10:28.35 in the 3200 and a 5:00.67 in the 1600. She was the first girl finisher (7th overall) in the Walton Memorial 5K during the summer.

DANIELLE LEAVITT, Lacey: Had a great junior year up to the AG meet, winning her conference, county and sectional titles and placing 4th in a loaded Gr. III race in 19:07. Injuries plagued her both indoors and out, but she managed to break 11:00 in the 3200 in both seasons, though missing the state meets.

GILLIAN MCELROY, Summit: Won a couple of invitationals last fall and took the Union County title. Last spring, got below 11:00 in the 3200.

MEGHAN MALLOY, Haddonfield (15): Cain's running mate who finished in front of her in the AG race in 18L53, but railed her in most track races, though breaking 11:30 for the 3200 outdoors. Will not be around next year when the Haddons pick up junior track sensation Brianna Gess as a freshman.

CLARISSA MODDE, Voorhees (30): A strong sophomore season saw her run 19:18 in the Gr. II meet and 19:26 in the AG. Outdoors, she had a 10:53.20 in the 3200.

LIZ NEWMAN, Ridge (38): One of the state's top frosh last fall, she ran 19:36 in the AG meet and opened her soph season with a 5th at the Randolph Invitational A race.

ARIANA NORTH, Northern Highlands (8): Dominated the Bergen County scene last fall, sweeping group and AG honors there, then won the sectional race, placed 2nd in Gr. III at 18:47 and lowered that to 18:32 in the AG race. Had an early 11:04.99 3200 indoors, then was sidelined until late outdoors where she managed a 5:05+ in the sectionals.

NATALIE OCASIO, Lenape: Ran 2nd and 3rd against some of the state's best in her South Jersey meets, but missed the AG due to injury which kept her out of action for much of both the indoor and outdoor seasons. Returned in early may with a series of sub-5:00 races, culminating with a 4:56.01 in the AG meet.

SARAH PAGANO, Ridgewood: Probably the No. 1 frosh in the state last fall, she lost the last half of that and all of indoors to injury. She returned midway in the outdoor campaign and ran 4:57.35 in the 1600 and 10:59.90 in the 3200.

EMILY QUINN, Gill-St. Bernard's (32): With graduated sister Sarah, led her team to a big upset win over Mt. St. Dominic in the Parochial A meet, then ran 19:27 at the AGs.

COLETTE RICHTER, Mt. Lakes (14): Led Mt. Lakes to the Gr. I title last fall, winning the race in 18:56. Then ran 18:49 in the AG event. Became her school's first indoor runner, doubling the Gr. I 1600 and 3200, then running 5th in the AG 3200 in 10:26.59. Continued her fine season outdoors, clocking 4:59.79 in the 1600 with another Gr. I double.

MARIA RUSKAN, Bridgewater (4): Finally got to the sport last fall, taking her sectional title and chasing Dana Giordano of Bernards home in her conference, county and group races. She fnailed her foe at the AG meet, running 18:23. Was sidelined early indoors with injuries and returned late in the outdoor campaign to run 4:54.70 and 11:01.30. Opened her senior campaign with a victory in the A race at the Randolph Invitational.

ABBY SEEL, Mendham (19): Perhaps the state's top No. 2 runner, Abby trailed teammate Mackenzie Barry throughout the 2011 season, running 19:09 in the AG meet. She hit her peak in the outdoor AG meet with a 10:32.15 3200 and also had a 4:58.18 1600.