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Slattery, Satir capture M of C championships

By Jim Lambert

A lot of cross-country races have been won and lost in the woods at Holmdel Park over the years.

Yesterday was no different. Steve Slattery of Mt. Olive and Dana Satir of Ramsey were second in the boys' and girls' races at the 25th NJSIAA Cross-Country Meet of Champions when they entered the woods. The woods are a portion of Holmdel's 3.1-mile layout that begin approximately three quarters of a mile from the finish and stretch for about 900 meters. It's the only section of the course not visible to spectators.

In the woods, Slattery and Satir made big moves to grab late leads and used punishing kicks to come up with dramatic victories.

Slattery, trailing Seton Hall Prep's Adam Daniels by about 25 yards heading into the woods, won the boys' title in a sizzling 15:48.7. That's the 10th fastest time ever at Holmdel, where the M of C has been held since 1975, and the fastest time on the course since Brendan Heffernan of North Hunterdon ran 15:31.0 to win the M of C title in 1991.

Satir, down 15 yards prior to the woods, fought past Abbey Hartman of Ocean City to win the girls' title in 18:52.3, 23d fastest all-time on the girls' list at Holmdel and the fastest girls' time on the course since Ridgewood's Jenna Rogers ran 18:34.0 to win the M of C in 1993.

Slattery, a junior, and Satir, a senior, are the first M of C cross-country winners from their schools.

Daniels made a surge coming out of the bowl to open a 50-yard gap on both Slattery and Westfield's Matt Elmuccio. Although his lead dwindled to 25 yards at the woods, Daniels still looked like he was headed for an easy victory. But then Slattery came charging.

"At first, I thought he was too far in front," said Slattery, who ran 15:56.4 to win Group 3 last week at Holmdel. "I made a move because I was afraid of Elmuccio outkicking me. Then I saw that I was getting closer to Daniels. I thought I had a chance to get him down the final hills right before we came out of the woods."

Daniels was second in 15:52.2 and Elmuccio third in 15:57.5. It was the first time since 1988 that more than one runner broke 16 minutes at the M of C.

"I always thought I could win this," said Slattery, ninth as a fresh-



Steve Slattery of Mt. Olive crosses finish line to win boys race and Dana Satir is congratulated by teammate Allison Campbell after winning girls race during Meet of Champions yesterday in Holmdel Park.



man and third last year at the M of C. "I eased up in the woods," said Daniels, who has never beaten Slattery in cross-country. "I thought I had it wrapped up and then he came on and surprised me."

In the girls' race, Satir, the favorite coming in based on her 15:57.2 in winning in Group 2 at Holmdel last week, took command about a quarter mile before the woods. But then Hartman, who wound up second in 18:58.6, surged ahead of her and opened a 10-meter lead as at the woods.

"I didn't feel like I was catching up to her," said Satir. "I remained pa-

tient and I was finally able to go in front for good coming out of the woods. I had a dream the other night that I was in the lead and then fell down when I looked back. So I didn't look back. I can't describe what a great feeling this is."

BOYS
TEAMS: 1-Christian Brothers 66, 2-Westfield 67, 3-Brick 103, 4-Morristown 151, 5-Randolph 153, 6-Highland Regional 160, 7-Debarton 172, 8-St. Joseph's (Met.) 220, 9-Jefferson 243, 10-Palissades Park 255, 11-Demarest 272, 12-Somerville 341, 13-Pingry 344, 14-Henry Hudson, 349, 15-Haddonfield 357, 16-Metuchen 364, 17-Red Bank Catholic 367, 18-Mater Dei 449.

INDIVIDUALS: 1-Steve Slattery, Mt. Olive 15:48.7, 2-Adam Daniels, Seton Hall Prep 15:52.2, 3-Matt Elmuccio, Westfield 15:57.5, 4-Tom DeSordo, Morristown 16:10.2, 5-Roger Munoz, Kearny 16:10.6, 6-Murad Campbell, Overbrook 16:22.2, 7-Mike Ratta, Brick 16:22.9, 8-Ian Hahn, Manchester Township 16:26.9, 9-Nathan Sisco, North Hunterdon 16:27.8, 10-Cary Snyder, Demarest 16:28.1, 11-Brian Salter, Whippany Park 16:30.9, 12-Austin O'Reilly, Msgr. Donovan 16:33.0, 13-Terence Rizer-Byrd, Christian Brothers 16:33.5, 14-Ed Letts, Middle Township 16:35.4, 15-Jim Steinemann, Debarton 16:37.5, 16-Karl Savage, Eastern 16:39.8, 17-Al Rispoli, Toms River East 16:42.6, 18-Steve Raman, Monroe 16:43.6, 19-Bill Hoffman, Christian Brothers 16:44.4, 20-Diego Giotre, Palissades Park 16:47.2, 21-Dan Contreras, Dea Bosco Prep 16:47.5, 22-Mike McGowan, Bishop Eustace 16:48.0, 23-Brian Bennett, Christian Brothers 16:50.4, 24-Ryan Smith, Morristown 16:51.2, 25-Matt Ruhl, Triton 16:52.4.

GIRLS
TEAMS: 1-Red Bank Catholic 90, 2-Shawnee 93, 3-Toms River East 112, 4-Bishop Eustace 138, 5-Ramsey 177, 6-Brick 195, 7-Paul VI 208, 8-Ridgewood 215, 9-St. Rose 219, 10-Point Pleasant Boro 242, 11-Egg Harbor 245, 12-Toms River South 245, 13-Ridge 292, 14-St. John Vianney 366, 15-Pingry 366, 16-A.P. Schalk 477, 17-Metuchen 491, 18-Bogota 539.

INDIVIDUALS: 1-Dana Satir, Ramsey 18:52.3, 2-Abbey Hartman, Ocean City 18:58.6, 3-Lauren Dunning, Toms River East 19:04.7, 4-Meghan Cunliff, Red Bank Catholic 19:12.6, 5-Maria Nitto, Pope John 19:13.4, 6-Cheryl Bauer, Morris Hills 19:16.6, 7-Jenn Pesce, Toms River North 19:22.2, 8-Maura Solger, St. Rose 19:24.9, 9-Jamie Glenn, Point Pleasant Boro 19:26.7, 10-Nikki Thieman, Shawnee 19:28.3, 11-Lisa Selter, Shawnee 19:32.8, 12-Lorena Adams, Manchester Township 19:38.2, 13-Jen Cannistra, Sparta 19:42.3, 14-Ann Klocke, Bishop Eustace 19:47.3, 15-Celeste Sedo, Ridgewood 19:48.7, 16-K.C. Meehan, Brick 19:51.2, 17-Meghan Ganey, Ridge 19:52.1, 18-Amanda Eltringham, Bishop Eustace 19:52.6, 19-Adrianne deSol, Bishop Eustace 19:53.2, 20-Jamie Wetzell, Toms River North 19:56.0, 21-Sara Tindall, Pingry 20:01.7, 22-Lauren Kelly, Morris Hills 20:03.1, 23-Patty Martin, Hackensack 20:04.2, 24-Erica DeSalvatore, Toms River South 20:05.0, 25-Meghan O'Toole, Garfield 20:05.5.

CBA wins showdown; RBC girls triumph

By Jim Lambert

The Christian Brothers and Westfield showdown lived up to all the pre-race hype and the Red Bank Catholic girls, who overcame adversity all season, rose to the occasion again yesterday at the 25th NJSIAA Cross-Country Meet of Champions in Holmdel Park.

In the closest boys' finish in race history, CBA, No. 1 in the Star-Ledger Top 15, rallied over the final mile to edge No. 2 Westfield, 66-67, to repeat as boys' champion and increase its state-record bag of M of C titles to nine. For the second time, Westfield was the runner-up to CBA at the M of C. In 1980, CBA beat Westfield, 82-86. Westfield won its only M of C title in 1978. A public school boys team hasn't won at the Meet of Champions since Bernards in 1985.

On the girls' side, No. 3 Red Bank Catholic, which suffered several key injuries during the season, proved it has the heart of a champion by running its gutsiest race of the season to defeat No. 2 Shawnee, 90-93, to capture the girls' title for the third straight year and extended its state record to eight girls' M of C titles. No. 1 Toms River East was third with 122. The three-point margin of victory

by the Caseys was the third closest girls' finish in race history.

In the boys' race, Westfield, as coach Jack Martin predicted, got out fast and had a big lead at a mile and held a 10-point lead at two miles.

But, CBA put on a big surge through the woods and escaped with the narrowest of victories. One key for CBA was that its third man, Brian Bennett, finished two places ahead of Westfield's No. 2, Abdallah Simaika.

The outcome might have been different for Westfield if Ryan Stefuk didn't take a spill with about a quarter mile remaining.

"I started slipping and went down," said Stefuk. "I know Ryan Smith (Morristown) passed me when I was down and he wound way ahead of me."

Smith finished 24th in 16:51.2, 11 places ahead of Stefuk, 35th in 17:00.1.

"They (Westfield) said that the first 600 would be the key and we felt it was the finish that mattered most," said Bennett. "It's a 3.1-mile race so we weren't concerned when they got that fast start. We knew it would be close and that every place would be important."

"We ran well enough to win," said CBA coach Tom Heath. "At a mile,

they were destroying us and at two miles they were still ahead. Over the last mile, Hoffman (Bill), Bennett and Brasch (Walker) really lifted and finished well. I'm kind of shocked right now. I guess that's how you feel when you win by a point. We knew it would be close. Westfield is a good team and ran a good race. I feel a little lucky today."

"This is where we wanted to be all season and we gave it a good effort," said Matt Elmuccio of Westfield, third in 15:57.5. "Being so close is disappointing."

"Our guys came to run and so did their guys," said Martin. "We got the great start we wanted and they had a good finish. It was great season no matter how you look at it."

In the girls' race, Shawnee led Red Bank Catholic, 63-60, after their fourth runners crossed. But RBC's fifth, Melanie Bauman, the niece of head coach Mary Banks, nailed down the trophy by finishing 27th among runners from team qualifiers in 20:32.6. Shawnee's fifth, Erin McGuckin, was 33d among runners from team qualifiers in 20:45.5. Bauman's finish allowed Red Bank Catholic to pick up six points on Shawnee and provided the final margin of 90-93.