

Bernards wins state X-c crown again

Faith 1st; Martins runnerup

By KAREN LONG

It was no surprise that Ron Faith of Paul VI of Haddonfield won the boys race yesterday in the cross-country Meet of Champions at Holmdel County Park.

It was also no surprise that Bernards took the team honors for the third time in the last five years ahead of St. Joseph's of Metuchen and Paul VI.

However, the ease with which Faith completed his victory and the second-place finish of Carlos Martins of Newark East Side were not on the agenda.

"Everything went according to plan," related the 16-year-old Faith, who was clocked in 18:10. "That was the biggest surprise of all."

"The race went smoothly and this is what the whole season of training has been building toward."

Faith made the most of his training and was flawless around the wooded, 2.1-mile course.

"The race went off just as I like it," said the 16-year-old Faith. "The pace built steadily and then progressed in the last mile."

Faith settled into the back of the leading pack that was paced by Eric Sturtevant of Morrisstown and remained there until the final mile.

"I didn't start to press until we reached the bowl," said Faith, referring to the hilly area of the course about two miles out. "I really didn't take the lead until the last mile. That was what we had decided."

Faith was aided in his strategy by coach Mike Glavin.

"He ran a textbook race," praised Glavin. "Everything was pretty much perfect."

McKibbin leads TRE 2-1 upset of Hightstown

Brenden McKibbin came through with a goal and an assist yesterday when Toms River East posted a stunning 2-1 victory over Hightstown, No. 1 in the Star-Ledger Soccer Top 20, in the semifinals.

BOYS' SOCCER

The semifinal round of the state Group 4 tournament in Lawrenceville. Toms River East will play the winner of today's Westfield-Kearny match for Group 4 honors at 6 p.m. Wednesday at Trenton State College.

McKibbin scored on passes from John Decker and Ike Ruhnke in the third quarter. Mike Brown then took a pass from McKibbin and connected from 18 yards to give Toms River East (18-5-1) a 2-0 lead in the fourth period. Hightstown (20-2-1) averted a shutout on Jim Barlow's penalty kick with 40 seconds remaining.

BOYS' X-COUNTRY

his idea. I just tried to convince him not to press too early, to wait until he was on his way up the hill (the stretch leading out of the bowl)."

Martins also came to the championship with a plan and he almost pulled off what would have been a major upset. As it was, Martins, who finished in 16:14, outdistanced Sturtevant, clocked in 16:26, by two places and Herb Williams of Lakewood, who finished eighth in 16:44.

"Martins came here with the attitude that he was going to finish in the top five," related Newark East Side coach Ollie Dickerson. "He came out to place and he did. It's a personal accomplishment for him."

Martins, who started running cross-country this season, was a little surprised himself.

"I guess I surprised everyone," said the 16-year-old. "I tried to stay with Sturtevant. For most of the last mile, I was third."

Martins' final kick gave him second place when he beat Jeff Simpson of Bernards by one second.

"I never thought I would finish second," admitted the 5-7 junior. "The last 500 yards, I just sprinted with all I had."

Bernards won the team honors easily with four runners placing among the top 15 for 49 points. However, second place was not as easily defined. St. Joseph's and Paul VI finished tied at 138 points and the decision came on the finishes of their sixth racers.

Nick Labondzo gave St. Joseph's the edge in 70th place ahead of Paul VI's sixth runner, Matt Cieslik, who finished 85th among more than 150 runners.

TEAMS: 1-Bernards 49, 2-St. Joseph's (Met.) 138, 3-Paul VI (Haddonfield) 138, 4-Spartan 138, 5-Christian Brothers 103, 6-North Hunterdon 97, 7-Christiansburg 88, 8-Morrisstown 87, 9-Morrisstown 84, 10-Raritan 83.

INDIVIDUALS: 1-Ron Faith, Paul VI 18:10; 2-Carlos Martins, Newark East Side 16:14; 3-Jeff Simpson, Bernards 16:15; 4-Eric Sturtevant, Morrisstown 16:26; 5-Brian Rabasa, North Hunterdon 16:32; 6-Andy Bell, Princeton 16:37; 7-Andy Gough, Haddonfield 16:42; 8-Herb Williams, Lakewood 16:44; 9-Tyler Brown, Bernards 16:45; 10-John Chester, Caldwell 16:46; 11-Vic Smith, Bernards 16:47; 12-Christopher Mann, Elizabethtown 16:48; 13-Jeff Friedman, Bernards 16:50; 14-Curtis Clark, Parsippany 16:52; 15-Michael Belongovito, Raritan 16:54; 16-Ronald Montemurro, Mahwah 17:01; 17-Derek Bernstein, Ridgewood 17:08; 18-Dennis Molnar, Morrisown 16:20; 19-Steve Lewis, Morris Hills 17:32; 20-Kevin McQueen, Mahwah 17:52.



Ron Faith of Paul VI of Haddonfield is congratulated by meet director Jack Rafter after finishing first in Meet of Champions.

North Hunterdon captures crown

Biotta (1st), Letko (2d) spark 3d straight title

By KAREN LONG

The North Hunterdon girls swept honors yesterday at the Meet of Champions cross-country race in Holmdel County Park that brought an end to the New Jersey high school season.

Jodi Biotta and Anne Letko finished first and second to lead North Hunterdon to the team trophy.

North Hunterdon, with 32 points, easily outdistanced its opposition. Bernards finished second with 84 and Brick third with 104. Biotta's winning time was 18:44 and Letko came across the line in 18:48. Karen Alesara of Bernards was third in 18:51.

It was a dream come true for Biotta and Letko and for their coach Bob McGivney, whose team has won the championship three consecutive years.

"This would have to be my finest hour," said McGivney, who began his coaching career in baseball at the Hun School in Princeton in 1957. "Not only do we win a state championship, but we have two state champions. If you take out one, you still have another."

"The kids dream but a coach fantasizes. Not in my wildest fantasies did I expect them to finish first and second."

Biotta and Letko did have ideas for a one-two finish and both are just as happy about their individual finish as they are about their teammates.

"There is nothing better than seeing your teammate winning," said Letko, a 16-year-old junior. "She really deserved to win and, with her in front of me, I was pushed even more."

The two spent most of the race running within one or two places of one another, with Letko always holding a slight lead. Alesara, who was undisturbed in races until yesterday, was close behind the leaders.

"I always like to start out hard," said Letko, who finished 20th last year. "I try to stay out in front as long as I can."

Not until the final mile did the North Hunterdon girls start to separate.

"I wanted to try to break away at the bowl," said the 15-year-old Biotta, who gave North Hunterdon its first all-groups girls' champion. "The trail was in good shape and I took off at the top."

Biotta's move at the bowl, a hilly area approximately two miles into the race, had been planned by McGivney.

"We all know that, for them to win, they would have to win in the middle of the race," said McGivney. "We discussed that fact and I think they kept that in mind."

But Biotta and Letko are not all McGivney has to be proud about.

"This is the first time I've had runners of the peak-of-the-pyramid caliber," said McGivney, whose runners combined for a total time of 97:42. "I've coached a lot of sports but I won't leave this. I have 12 quality runners and five of them didn't run today. But they could make any other team's lineup."

Sandy LaPlaca finished fifth in 19:18. Joanne LaPlaca eighth in 19:36 and Denise Byrnes 20th in the team competition in 20:36. Overall, Byrnes finished 34th because several runners were involved only in individual competition.

McGivney and his two leaders now are directing their attention toward the Kinsey Northeast qualifying race at VanOrland Park in The Bronx Saturday. Biotta and Letko will both look to qualify for the nationals in California.

"Those two are going to be on Cloud 9," smiled McGivney. "They're going to be impossible to manage but it should help them tremendously next week."

TEAMS: 1-North Hunterdon 32, 2-Bernards 84, 3-Brick 104, 4-Logan 116, 5-Coffey 121, 6-Paul VI (Haddonfield) 122, 7-Morris 125, 8-North Hunterdon Central 126, 9-Princeton 128, 10-Red Bank Catholic 130.

INDIVIDUALS: 1-Jodi Biotta, North Hunterdon 18:44; 2-Anne Letko, North Hunterdon 18:48; 3-Karen Alesara, Bernards 18:51; 4-Jan VanHorn, Wayne Valley 19:11; 5-Sandy LaPlaca, North Hunterdon 19:18; 6-Tracy Abernethy, Springfield 19:28; 7-Ruth Lockbaum, Glenboro 19:36; 8-North Hunterdon 19:36; 9-Jackie Paz, Clifton 19:42; 10-Denise Byrnes, North Hunterdon 19:36; 11-Denise Byrnes, North Hunterdon 19:36; 12-Christina Sterling 19:51; 13-Liz Dwyer, Kearny 19:54; 14-Sarah Francis, Ridge 19:58; 15-Mary Mahony, Paul VI 20:02; 16-Cecilia Fordyce, Bernards 20:02; 17-Mary O'Keefe, Ridge 20:02; 18-Amy Holcomb, Holmdel 20:10; 19-Jeanette O'Connell, Egg Harbor 20:11; 20-Wendy Rosbury 20:12; 21-Jackie O'Rourke, St. Rose 20:14.

Photo by Don Lantz



North Hunterdon's Jodi Biotta heads for finish line and victory in Meet of Champions yesterday at Holmdel Park.

Photo by Don Lantz

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