

Spoonire, Chokshi rein Meet of Champions titles

By MIKE G. MORREALE

Monal Chokshi of Bridgewater was forced to use a pair of training shoes in defense of her state Meet of Champions girls' cross-country championship yesterday at Holmdel County Park.

"I don't understand it, I left my running spikes on the table and when I returned they were missing," said a perplexed Chokshi, about a half hour before the 11:45 a.m. start. "Luckily, I had a pair of training shoes with me, so I had no choice but to put them on."

The training shoes were not a handicap. Chokshi again proved she is the state's finest high school girls' cross-country competitor by winning the 3.1-mile race in 18:44 and beating her winning time of a year ago by 29 seconds.

The girls' team title went to Voorhees, ranked No. 4 in The Star-Ledger's Cross-Country Girls Top 10, with 120 points. No. 3 Paul VI of Haddon Township was second with 136.

Bryan Spoonire of Asbury Park, the 1989 boys state champion, excelled again to take the boys' race in 15:56, nine seconds faster than the winning time he posted in 1989. The boys' team championship was won by Christian Brothers Academy, ranked second in The Star-Ledger Top 10, with 96 points. No. 1 Paul VI placed second with 130.

"I started off the race the way I usually do, going out in front and working from there," said Chokshi, a 15-year-old sophomore whose best time this season was an 18:39 in the state Central Jersey, Group 4 race. "I was hoping to beat my best

time. If I had my running spikes, I might have done it."

Finishing 57 seconds behind Chokshi in second place was Kristen Hall of West Morris.

"I got off to a quick start, but Monal ran a perfect race," said Hall. Mirjam Pietersman of Ocean City placed third in 19:46, one second ahead of Danielle Gelsomino of Roxbury.

Roxbury coach Byron Collins was impressed with the effort by Gelsomino.

"Not too bad for a girl who has only been running six weeks," he said. Gelsomino, who started running this season, made an immediate impact. She won the North Jersey, Section 2, Group 4 race at Warranum Park in Elizabeth on Oct. 27 in 19:59. She's continued to run well since, and was

pleased with her performance in the Meet of Champions.

"Although it was a cold day, once I started running, I began to warm up right away," said Gelsomino, holding a bouquet of flowers given to her by her sister, Laura. "I'm very happy with the finish."

Mt. Olive's Christine Engel, the North Jersey, Section 2, Group 3 state champion, who was considered one of the top challengers for the Meet of Champions title, finished 22d in 20:29.

"It was just one of those days, I guess," said Engel. "Right from the start I felt very tired and although I wanted to stay close to the front of the pack, I was just unable to do it."

Voorhees, despite not having a runner among the top 24, won its first girls' team title. Greta Norcross was the first Voorhees runner across the line, placing 25th in 20:45.

"These girls have worked very hard all year for this," said Voorhees girls' coach Chris Goffi. "The girls came into this race relaxed and it showed in the end. At the start of the race, I felt we were out to our worst start of the year, but around the two-mile mark, the girls began to pick it up and they all worked very hard until the end."

Tom Heath, the boys' coach at Christian Brothers, also was enthused by his team's winning effort.

"I feel great," said Heath, who completed his 20th season as the team's head coach. "Everyone knew that we had it in us and we proved that today. Each runner on the team concentrated on finishing in a personal best time and the results were rewarding."

Bob Duffy, Paul VI head coach, entered today's meet seeking a third straight boys' team title, but those hopes were shattered when Christian Brothers placed four runners in the top 41, only two by Paul VI. Spoonire, who crossed the finish line 13 seconds faster than Ray Berger of Asbegan, called the race his best of the season.

"I opened the race wanting to finish in the top three," said Spoonire. "There were three runners bunched together (Spoonire included) at around the one-mile mark, and I began to pull away with about a mile and a half left."

The North Jersey, Section 2, Group 2 champion, Brian Walsh of Chatham, finished third in 16:11, edging Parochial A champion Pete Dougherty of Paul VI by five seconds. "Boy, that was some log jam at the one-mile mark," explained Walsh. "I tried to keep pace with Bryan (Spoonire), but he is a quick runner. I knew that a lot of talented runners would be here today and I feel fortunate to place this high."

MEET OF CHAMPIONS BOYS

TEAMS: 1-Voorhees 120, 2-Paul VI (Haddon Township) 136, 3-Asbury Park 126, 4-Toms River North 147, 5-Red Bank Catholic 187, 6-Ocean City 189, 8-Kingsway 194, 10-Bishop Eusebius 210, 11-Toms River East 211, 12-Kittanning 216, 13-Asbegan 221, 14-Mt. Olive 232, 15-Newark 275, 16-Sacred Heart 282. INDIVIDUALS: 1-Monal Chokshi, Bridgewater 18:44; Kristen Hall, West Morris 19:41; Mirjam Pietersman, Ocean City 19:46; Danielle Gelsomino, Roxbury 19:47; Janet River, Pleasant Hill 19:48; Eric Mare, Kingsway 19:56; 7-Stria Cinola, Manasquan 19:57; 9-Jackie Erickson, Red Bank 20:01; 9-Lori Townsend, Kingsway 20:08; 10-Cheryl 20:10; 10-Karen Auler, Newark 20:12; 10-Jessica Smith, Shawnee 20:19; 10-Missy Abrams, Roxbury 20:17; 10-Karen Auler, Newark 20:22; 10-Jessica Smith, Bishop Eusebius 20:22; 10-Heather Bury, West Orange 20:23; 10-Tracye Pappas, Paul VI 20:24; 10-Christie Engel, Mt. Olive 20:29; 20-Stephanie Anderson, Newton 20:33; 20-Stephanie Anderson, Newton 20:33; 20-Cecilia Norcross, Voorhees 20:45.



Bryan Spoonire of Asbury Park and Monal Chokshi of Bridgewater were winners of the boys and girls races in the state Meet of Champions yesterday at Holmdel County Park.

Watson, Lenape take state championships

By JIM LAMBERT

Joanne Watson couldn't wipe the smile off her face.

Moments earlier, the Lenape senior had won the all-around championship at Haddonfield Central in Raritan Township to lead Lenape to its first New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association girls' gymnastics team championship in the last four years.

Lenape, the 1987 and 1988 champion, outpointed defending champion Cherokee, 106.35 to 104.10. Freehold Township, led by its outstanding freshman, Fara Berkowitz, took third with a score of 103.75.

The floor exercise decided the team and all-around championships. And Lenape was confident going in its last event, Watson's and teammate Erika Maughan's best. Going into the floor exercise, Lenape trailed Cherokee, which had completed its competition by 25.45 points.

Watson needed a 9.05 out of a possible 10 to move past Stacy Witczak of Cherokee, who led the all-around with 38.45 points.

As Watson, the final Lenape competitor, prepared to take her final tum-

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bling run, the crowd of approximately 400, sensing that she had secured a score high enough to give her the all-around championship and Lenape the team title, began clapping and chanting her name in tribute.

"The floor is my best event," said Watson, who conceded she had a case of the jitters until she knew with her uneven bars routine. "I done with a good chance of winning. I just wanted to do the best I could."

Her best was more than good enough. Watson's 9.2 was third best on the floor and gave her an overall total of 36.65 to edge Witczak for the all-around by 20 points. Her teammate, Maughan, won the floor with a score of 9.45.

"I'm so happy, right now," said Watson, who has been offered a scholarship to the University of Denver. "I just can't stop smiling. All the hard work I put into gymnastics has finally paid off."

Watson was fifth on the balance beam at 9.05 and second on the uneven bars at 9.25. She scored a 9.15 on the vault.

"Joanne was just outstanding," said coach Tina Broyles. "She was so focused and disciplined. I'm really happy for her and Erika. They have been with me for four years and we couldn't have done it without them. It's really great to see them go out on top."

Maughan, who is considering attending William & Mary College next year, had a day to remember. In addition to her almost flawless routine in the floor exercise, she took fifth in the vault with a 9.3.

"We knew we could nail the floor exercise," said Maughan. "This is the best way to go out on top."

On the balance beam, Lori Buck of Bishop Ahr in Edison, who was fifth in the all-around, took first with a 9.2. Berkowitz, a freshman at Freehold Township, was fourth in the all-around with 36 points. She was fourth in the uneven bars at 9.1 and second on the beam at 9.2.

Jen Clayton of fifth-place Red Bank Catholic stuck her landing on the vault and took home a gold medal with a 9.55.

Witczak took second in the vault with a 9.5, fourth in the floor at 9.15 and second in the all-around.

TEAMS

1-Lenape 106.35, 2-Cherokee 104.10, 3-Freehold Township 103.75, 4-Scotch Plains 102.60, 5-Red Bank Catholic 102.55, 6-Haddonfield Central 101.35, 7-Cranford 100.85, 8-Westfield 100.05, 9-Toms River North 99.10, 10-Haddonfield 98.40.

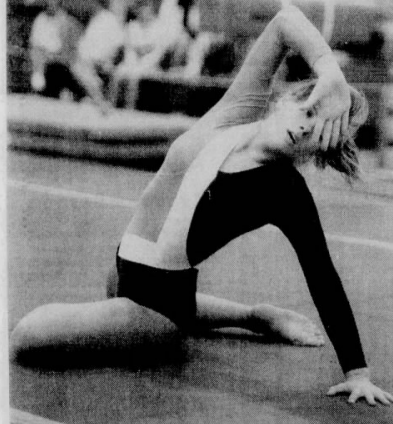
INDIVIDUALS

ALL-AROUND: 1-Joanne Watson, Lenape 36.65, 2-Stacy Witczak, Cherokee 36.45, 3-Dawn Versichilling, Westfield 36.35, 4-Fara Berkowitz, Freehold Township 36.10, 5-Lerika Paquin, Dwight-Englewood 36.10, 6-Lori Buck, Bishop Ahr 36.10, 7-Fara Berkowitz, Freehold Borough 35.20, 8-Dawn Versichilling, Westfield 35.15, 9-Fara D'Amato, Toms River East 35.05, 10-Joanne Watson, Lenape 34.95. FLOOR EXERCISE: 1-Erika Maughan, Lenape 9.45, 2-Fara D'Amato, Toms River East 9.45, 3-Joanne Watson, Lenape 9.2, 4-Stacy Witczak, Cherokee 9.15, 5-Michelle Weinstein, Manasquan 9.1. UNEVEN BARS: 1-Erika Paquin, Dwight-Englewood 9.55, 2-Joanne Watson, Lenape 9.25, 3-Kim Kupka, Cranford 9.2, 4-Fara Berkowitz, Freehold Township 9.1, 5-Dawn Versichilling, Westfield 9.0. VAULTING: 1-Jen Clayton, Red Bank Catholic 9.55, 2-Stacy Witczak, Cherokee 9.5, 3-Heather beam, Middletown North 9.4, 4-Tracy Pappas, Asbegan 9.35, 5-Erika Maughan, Lenape 9.3.

Bergen C stops Ridgewood, 6-0

Junior halfback Eric Lane scored the only touchdown and senior cornerback Mike Cerullo intercepted three passes when Bergen Catholic scored a 6-0 victory over Ridgewood yesterday in Ridgewood.

Lane capped a seven-play, 38-yard drive with a sweep around the left side that went for 23 yards and a TD in the second quarter for Bergen Catholic (7-2). All three of Cerullo's interceptions halted drives by Ridgewood (5-4) into Bergen Catholic territory.



Kelly Moser, a junior at Scotch Plains, performs her floor routine during state championships yesterday.

The scoreboard

Table with columns for Football, SOMERSET, UNION, MIDDLESEX, MERCER, MONMOUTH, THURSDAY, and various school names and scores.

Football playoffs

Table listing New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association Football Playoffs First Round Saturday games, including Group 1 through Group 7 matchups.

Reeve, Keyport rip Holmdel, 26-6

Odel Reeve ran for 101 yards and two touchdowns on 12 carries yesterday to lead Keyport to a 26-6 victory over Holmdel in Keyport. Keyport, which capitalized on three interceptions, will meet Highland Park in the first round of the Central Jersey Group 1 playoffs Saturday.