

Track & field: These athletes stood out at the Big North league meets

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NorthJersey.com

The busiest week of the entire track season is always divisional meet week with 11 different divisions in the Big North and NJIC Conferences hosting meets at six different sites. Here's the best of the NJIC meets.



Keep coming back all week to follow all the stories from all the meets. And at the bottom of the post, follow along with an updated performance list of the top 5 in each of the 16 league events.

Highlands girls, Ridgewood boys excel

When Northern Highlands girls coach Tom Viscardi convened his team in April, more than a year since the Highlanders had last competed in the spring, he wasn't sure what the future held.

"We'd graduated a lot of great kids and I wasn't sure we'd win many meets at all," said Viscardi. We knew we needed kids in lots of events and I wasn't sure we'd have them."

But not only have the Highlanders won some meets, they appear to be favorites to win an eighth straight North 1, group 3 sectional title after defeating group 4 sectional favorite Ridgewood, 182 1/2-168 for the Freedom division title on Friday.

"We've gotten two or three kids in every event and they've pushed themselves to do this," said Viscardi.

The Highlanders have their stars but the solid supporting players have also added their points to the tally. First year junior Caitlyn Kunisch won the high jump and scored a total of 26 points in her four events, while steady senior Christina Hughes added a first in the triple jump and scored 24 points in her three events.

Northern Highlands scored in every event, with stars Molly Bennett (400-400 hurdles) and Brynn Madonna (shot-discus) adding seconds in a third event and Randi Conroy, as usual, dominating the pole vault. And newcomers freshman Rebecca Maclaren (800-1,600) and senior Athena Georgiades (shot-discus) gave the Highlanders even more depth.

The Ridgewood boys have also dominated their section, winning eight sectional title since 2008 when no other team has won more than one. And the Maroons with a less complete team than usual could make it nine in a tightly contested meet, after holding off a vastly improved Ramapo team, 178-140.

"We've really have some guys step up who we didn't know what we'd get out of them," said Ridgewood coach Patrick Ryan. "Racine Ly (he won the 400) was

kid who showed up for a week before the pandemic hit and we didn't know if he'd come back. But he did and he seems to be getting better every week."

Athletes like Quinn McCutcheon (winner of the 800 and 3,200) helped the Maroons score 62 of a possible 72 points in the distance races and depth pieces like Alex Shevchenko (high jump), Jake Stadulis (110 hurdles), Ryan Pfund (pole vault) and Matt Aono (pole vault) also did their part.

The Maroons also got wins from Sean Fortunato (1,600), Red Kossick (110 hurdles), Ryan McKenna (400 hurdles), Sean Emmanuel (long jump) and Luke Gnospelius (pole vault).

NV/Old Tappan boys, and NV/Demarest welcome return of National Division with wins

After a three-year absence, the National division returned and so did the Northern Valley rivalry of sister schools Demarest and Old Tappan.

The NV/Old Tappan boys defeated the Norsemen, 192-139, while the Demarest girls beat OT, 200 1/2-125 1/2. Bergenfield's boys and Tenafly's girls finished third.

"I thought it was going to be a close meet," said Old Tappan boys coach Pete Dunn. "Our guys really competed on the track and we had multiple kids scoring in more than one event."

"For instance, our real good pole vaulter Shaun Herlihy wins the pole vault and scores in two other events, and that's rarely mentioned," said Dunn. "We get 1-2-4 in the shot against Demarest and go 1-2-3 in the javelin -- that's really important."

Dunn also complimented senior Steven Hatano, who seemed to struggle all year but won the 1,600 and took third in the 3,200.

Demarest girls coach Mike Ippolito pointed to his hurdles group, missing senior leader Ashna Kalvani, who sat out the meet with a foot injury.

"Our hurdles group is really deep -- Erin Nolan won the 400 hurdles and Lauren Constantine took the 100 hurdles," said Ippolito. "Ana Velcic placed in both and freshman Lauren Tong had a five second (in the 400 hurdles) in her first championship meet."

"And Liz Argenziano takes second in the 100 hurdles for us, and places in both jumps, just like she does in most meets."

"I seem always to be talking about our distance kids, our vaulters and our throwers who are standouts and won seven events for us today, but the hurdles kids get overlooked and I want to single them out today.

Individual standouts in the Freedom and National Divisions

These two divisions are perhaps the deepest and strongest in North Jersey and the stars are unfirmly bright.

Freedom Girls: Ridgewood has been blessed with one of the greatest groups of distance girls ever seen in North Jersey. But the Maroons also got an unexpected gift this year when Alysia Spencer moved with her family from State College, Pennsylvania.

Spencer made an immediate impact on the Ridgewood team and won the 100 and 200 Friday.

"I was surprised and happy to come to this program," said Spencer who ran and played soccer in Pennsylvania before boosting both Ridgewood teams. "I haven't seen anything like it before. As soon as I joined the team they were super supportive of me and I knew right away how good this team was."

Northern Highlands junior Molly Bennett continued to show she's the best 400 open runner and 400 hurdler in North Jersey, and also was second to Spencer in the 200 and ran a leg on the Highlanders' second place relay.

Six different Ridgewood stars combined for 67 points in the three distance races.

But the Maroons couldn't quite catch Northern Highlands which got two wins and a second from thrower Brynn Madonna and a routine standout effort from Randi Conroy in the vault

Freedom Boys: You can call him "the running quarterback". But the nickname might stick for Ramapo sophomore Jack Grusser, because in addition to being the favorite to be the next player to run coach Drew Gibbs' spread option offense, he may be the fastest QB in the state.

Grusser, who transferred from Bergen Catholic in February, had played lacrosse at the Oradell school, but decided he didn't want to play the sport anymore and switched to track, where he has had an immediate impact.

He won both the 100 and the 200 in the league meet, surprising even himself at how quickly he's adjusted to the track.

"Football is more side to side and short bursts," said Grusser, who has continued to throw the football to get ready for his first season. "Track is more of an art and it helps me to develop my mental game when I'm running. It's also the most fun I've ever had doing a sport."

Grusser knows the next level of sprinting (at states) will be tougher, but he welcomes the challenge.

"I want to see if I can stay on the same level of these really fast guys," said Grusser. "I think I can."

Hassan Bailey of Hackensack won both the shot and discus and backed up his huge PR in the discus at the Bergen meet with a 156 foot throw.

National Girls: Kimi Quayle and Casey Walter had a simple plan for the meet. Run the 1,600 meters together as a workout and then Quayle would run the 800 and Walter the 3,200 and each would go home with an NV/Demarest school record.

The plan almost worked to perfection. The two went 1-2 in the 1,600, 40 meters ahead of the third place finisher with Walter awarded the win. And late in the meet, Walter broke Andrea Rothschild's 3,200 record, set in 2006 by more than six seconds, running 11:16.99.

But Quayle's shot at breaking former Cornell star Christina Welzer's 2014 800 of 2:16.00 came up a bit short.

Nevertheless, the pair was beaming as they looked ahead to sectionals.

"I really wanted to get the school record and I'm glad I got it," said Walter.

"I'm just so happy we got a season and get to run. As long as we give it our all, I know we're going to do great. We've done the work."

Quayle agreed.

"I didn't get the school record, but I wasn't sure before the season started that I'd like the 800 at all," she said. "Now I like it so much that I'm going to keep doing it and see what I can do. I'm excited because now this season has shown me what I'm capable of doing."

Freshman Abigail Dennis of NV/Old Tappan doubled the sprints, while Demarest's Niki Woods threw a personal best of 141-9 in the javelin, and inching closer to the top 10 in Bergen history. Norina Khanzada of Tenafly doubled the high and long jumps and Jordan Hecker of Demarest made 11 feet in the pole vault.

National Boys: JC Baratta continued his terrific comeback from an unfortunate knee injury that threatened to derail his senior year, winning the

100 and 400, taking fifth in the 200 and running a leg on the second place relay.

Demarest's Lincoln Sorenson doubled the hurdles and Juniors Daniel Mikay (166-1) and Joseph DeCroce (155-8) had PRs in the discus. Bergenfield's Donovan Anderson just long and triple jumped at this meet. He won both events easily.

River Dell regains Patriot titles

After a two-year pause, one with NV/Demarest dropped in a league realignment for 2019 and the second for the COVID-19 suspension, last spring, River Dell re-asserted its command of the Patriot division with a pair of titles last week at River Dell.

The boys defeated Ramsey 117-62 and the girls outscored the Rams, 151 1/2-107 to regain the titles they held from 2013-2018.



In the girls meet, senior Amanda Mircovich and freshman Christina Allen dominated from 400 to 3,200 meters with a pair of victories each. Mircovich, who is headed for Lehigh, won the 400 (58.96) and the 800 and seems primed to go much faster at the upcoming sectionals. The same holds true for Allen, who breezed to a 5:23.66 clocking in the 1,600 and then ran a personal best 11:14.60.

The River Dell weight team scored 30 of a possible 36 points in the shot and discus with Mia Raso and Amelie Moon trading wins and seconds in those respective events and Nicole Dragotta adding a fourth in the shot.

But it was senior Gloria Lee who was the individual standout, winning the high jump at 4-10 and earning personal bests in winning the long jump (17-4) and triple jump (35-7) in her last home meet.

The boys got nearly as many points from their freshmen (21) as their seniors (22) in dominating a tight knit division. Westwood was missing one of its stars in senior Marcus Cheema, who was unable to run an individual event because of exam schedules and finished tied for third with 57 points.

Freshman Alex Saldana won both the 1,600 and 3,200 for the Golden Hawks, finishing together with teammate Max Emelo in the 1,600 and breezing to a 3,200 victory. Junior Tom DeLorenzo took the 100 in a personal best 11.17 and the boys weight team of Matt Tibus, Nick Iannantuano, Ian Van Riper and Christian Gioffre combined for a pair of wins and 29 points. Max Weinberg won the long jump and scored in two other events for River Dell.

Connor Munson won the 110 hurdles in a personal best 15.19 seconds and the high jump at 6-2 and was second to Bergen County record holder Max Zuckerman of Pascack Hills with a 14 foot pole vault.. Zuckerman cleared 15 feet and took three attempts at extending his county record to 16 feet.

Dumont girls break long drought; Fort Lee boys win



Veteran Dumont coach Jon Bennett wasn't sure what to expect from his Huskies girls team before the start of the Big North American division season.

"We are lower than usual on numbers due to the pandemic and volleyball happening at about the same time," he wrote in his pre-season preview. "The girls we have are talented and experienced and if we can spread them out we could be competitive in the division."

Mission accomplished. The Dumont girls won their first league title since capturing the BCSL American crown in 1990 on Thursday, after an undefeated dual meet season, that included a one-point win over Cliffside Park and a 73-67 win over undefeated Fort Lee two weeks ago in the last dual meet of the season. The Huskies outscored Fort Lee and Cliffside Park, 101-82-70 to earn the win.

"I knew the kids had it in them," said Dumont coach Jon Bennett, who graduated from Dumont the year before the Huskies' last title "We tried to tell them we could win."

Then came the win over Cliffside Park on the same day the team beat Dwight Morrow. "The kids were expecting a 1 and 1 day, and when they won both, their whole attitude changed. Things shifted from I want do to good to we want to do good."

As usual the Huskies were led by sprinter Sanai Bryant, who scored comfortable wins in the 100 and 200. And Bryant shared the spotlight with hurdlers Alexi Williams and Skylar Muller, who went 1-2 in both the 100 and 400 hurdles. Madison Cook and Nicole McHugh went 1-3 in the shot and McHugh added a second in the discus and a third in the javelin before Dumont fittingly won the 4-x-400 to end the meet with Williams, Lindsay Buchheister, and twins Annaliese and Brianna Manderson running the legs. The Huskies had clinched their close wins over Cliffside Park and Fort Lee with wins in the same event.

Other double winners in the division were Mia Martinez of Ridgefield Park in the 400 and 800 and Tasnim Eissa of Cliffside Park in the 1,600 and 3,200. But the divisional star was Fort Lee junior Alexander Manetovic, who remained unbeaten in the league with a seasonal best 5-2 in the high jump, 16-1 1/2 in the long jump and 34-9 in the triple jump.

Fort Lee's boys expected that the 2020 season would be one of their best. The Bridgemen had a senior laden team and expected to take back the league title last spring, after a terrific winter of 2020 that included a win in the Bergen County small schools Relays. But after COVID, the experienced team was gone to graduation.

No worries.

The young Bridgemen scored in every event but the pole vault and seniors scored only 14 of the 111 points and Fort Lee won its third title in the last four meets, 111-93 over Ridgefield Park.

"Once we got out of COVID and into the odd winter season, we had to regroup," said coach Dan Cirone. "A lot of kids we were expecting to come out for the team didn't for various reasons and we began wondering how this would all turn out. We used the winter to reevaluate things and get them to a spot where we could turn out a great product."

And then the Bridgemen found a unexpected gem at the Season Opener at Indian Hills the first weekend of the season.

"Matisse Bloem was a soccer player who had done pretty well for us in the distances," said Cirone. "He'd never won a 400 before and we were looking for a leg on a novice 4-x-400 so we threw him in there."

53 plus seconds later, Fort Lee had a new 400 meter runner. Thursday he edged Cliffside Park star Lukkas Londono as both were clocked in a speedy 50.35 seconds.

scored in every event but the pole vault and produced some brand new stars.

Other Fort Lee standouts were junior first year spring athlete, Tyson Love, who won the 200 and long jump and was second in the 110 hurdles and triple jump and sophomore Ekuyami Conteh did yeoman duty in the three distance races. Conteh took second in the 800 and 1,600 event before holding off fellow soph Frane Cebalo of Cliffside Park in the 3,200.

Junior O'Dell Holland Fincher won the 400 hurdles impressively. Bloem and Fincher were part of the winning 4-x-400 team that is among the best in Bergen County with soph Kaden Chan and senior Daniel Joseph

Other standouts in the meet were Ezekial Reyes of Ridgefield Park (800/1,600) and state contender VeRon Garrison, who threw a huge personal best of 59-2 3/4, fifth best throw in the state this year.

Bergen Catholic and IHA win easily

The Bergen Catholic boys team had eight different boys win events and placed at least in every event but the triple jump and discus to win a third straight title, 150-101 over Don Bosco.

The Crusaders had a North Jersey best performance from junior Fabian France, who ran 10.91 in the 100 and hold off teammate Adrian Taffe. But as he had in the Bergen E meet a week ago, Taffe turned the tables in the 200, running 22.79.



Owen McCarthy doubled the 800 and 1,600 reversing a loss in the latter event last weekend to Killian Moore of Don Bosco. He was the only double winner of the meet for the Crusaders.

Senior Justin Martone easily won the 110 hurdles, and soph Joseph Griffin, who had suffered a late race near-fall that cost him the Bergen E title, stayed firmly on his feet this time and won the 400 hurdles.

Austin Jones won the shot put and Alex Ust continued to be a contender for state honors in the javelin with a 30 foot victory. Jaden Ebanks won the high jump and took second in the long jump for the Crusaders and the team of Ebanks, Griffin, McCarthy and France combined to win the 4-x-400 relay.

Paramus Catholic senior Louis Frye was the only other double winner, winning the long jump with a leap of 20-9 3/4 and a personal best 43-4 in winning the triple jump.

IHA used superior depth, winning only five events, but scored at least third in every event and had three 1-2-3 sweeps to beat defending champ Paramus Catholic, 110-64, to earn its first league title since 2016.

Sophomore Leanna Johnston won both the 1,600 and 3,200, and the Blue Eagles took 25 of a possible 26 points in the events, sweeping the 1,600. The Blue Eagles also went 1-2-3 in the 800 (won by Jillian Shea), and high jump (won by Nikki Matthews), while Madison Libby edged Rachel Hippolyte of Paramus Catholic by half an inch to win the long jump.



Double wins went to Oluwatamilore (she goes by Tami) Adedeji of DePaul in 100 (12.48) and 200, and Tyaja Thomas of Paramus Catholic (personal bests of 107-2 in the discus and 123-2 in the javelin).

Passaic Tech uses star power and depth to sweep Liberty

Passaic Tech has dominated the Liberty division since it was established in 2011, winning nine of the 10 boys meets and eight in the girls division.

Wednesday, the Bulldogs took two different directions to keep their winning streaks alive.

On the boys side, four seniors, sprinters Keshon Holt, Jordan Ricketts and Hensley Jean-Baptiste and thrower Yosue Gomez combined for 98 of Passaic Tech's 170 points and all seven of its wins. The trio of sprinters were set to run the meet's final event, the 4-x-400 relay when the meet was halted and then declared complete.

On the other hand the girls team relied on much greater depth. While PCT's girls won eight events, only Anne Noonan (400/400 hurdles) was a double

winner. The Bulldogs girls placed three girls in an event nine of the 15 races and had two medalists in five of the other six individual events completed.



"Depth is a very good thing," said PCT girls coach Tiffany Tookmanian. "We didn't have this at the beginning of the year. (The coaches) told them we can only win as a team and that we're not super strong in any event. We needed to place in everything or we were in trouble."

So the Bulldogs did. Noonan won the opening event, the 400 hurdles, and the Bulldogs added second and fourth. Clifton went 1-2 in the 100 and PCT went 3-4, minimizing the point loss. Destiny Noemi Fernandez took the javelin and PCT also took third and fourth. Clifton won the shot easily and took two other places in the event. But Izabelle Grzybowski, Larryl Johnson and Chavi'Ola Lassiter went 2-3-4 and outscored the Mustangs by 5 points in that event.

Wins by Samiya Brown (long jump), Nia Rex (high jump), Jaidyn Dillon (pole vault) and Cicillia Martino (discus) put the meet so far out of reach that Clifton

girls coach Mike Rogers pulled distance stars Mia and Remy Dubac from their third event of the day, the 3,200 where the duo was certain to get their third 1-2 finish of the meet.

On the boys side, Baptiste, Holt and Ricketts put on a show on the track, while Gomez was out in the field, making late event magic.

Ricketts won the first event, the 400 hurdles in 55.37 seconds, sixth in the state this year. Holt won the 100 in 10.92, breaking a 33-year-old school record and 13th best in New Jersey this season.



Gomez had a huge personal best of 134-0 to win the discus but the Bulldogs still trailed Clifton by a point.

Then came the 400.

Before the race was called to the starting line, Holt and Ricketts, close friends but intense rivals on the track, were talking trash to each other as they always do. Baptiste just watched and laughed as he got ready.

When the gun went off, it looked like a PCT workout. The trio made up the staggered start on the field immediately and blew thru the finish with Ricketts the winner in 49.24 (tops in North Jersey this year), Holt in 49.70 (second) and Baptiste a huge PR in 50.25 (sixth). The one point deficit became a 22 point lead and the meet was essentially over.

The trio came back late in the meet for another sweep in the 200, Holt won his third event, the long jump and Gomez PR'd again in the shot, winning the event on his last throw of 47-9 3/4.

Thunderstorm creates Independence controversy

The Big North portion of league week got underway with one division meet, the United, going off at Don Bosco without a hitch. The Liberty/Independence division meet at Clifton -- not so much.

But in the end, the Bergen Catholic boys and IHA girls claimed the United division title at Don Bosco, Passaic Tech swept the boys and girls Liberty titles, Lakeland took the girls Independence title, and Lakeland and Passaic Valley were awarded co-championships of the boys Independence title, for PV its first boys league title since 1997.

The first three hours of the Clifton meet went well, and Passaic Tech steamed into an insurmountable lead in both Liberty meets as the meet neared the final races on the track. Both Independence meets were close and the Lakeland girls had appeared to cut a 24-point deficit down to four with a 1-2-3 sweep of the 3,200 behind Angelina Perez and Abigail Horevay's 1-2 finish. Just four girls events remained, three in the field and the 4-x-400 relay. On the boys side, Passaic Valley had seen a 46-point lead cut to 13 1/2 with the long jump, javelin and relay left.



Then the craziness started. The Lancers' third-place finisher in the girls 3,200 was disqualified despite a 45-second lead with less than 50 meters for stepping off the uncurbed track for a moment, although she finished on the track. That cut a 24-6 margin in the event for Lakeland to 18-10 and kept the Patriots 14 points ahead.

"I knew we had big points coming from the high and triple jumps, but I didn't know how big. I knew the discus wouldn't hurt us," said Lakeland coach Damiano Conforti. "We wanted to win the meet before the 4-x-400."

The results from the three field events were being calculated as the first of the 4-x-400 relays finished. Wayne Valley won the race with Wayne Hills third and Lakeland fourth. Wayne Hills' girls lead was 16 and Passaic Valley led the boys meet by 13 1/2.

The skies were darkening and it was clear that the thunderstorms that had been predicted were about to occur. Midway through the Liberty girls race, at

about 6:45 p.m., the lightning detector went off and the teams, who were already en route to their buses, sped up their trip and the race on the track was immediately stopped.

The remaining events were halted, and the teams got into their buses and got away safely. Shortly afterward the meet was officially called off with a decision as to any resumption left to the Executive Committee of the league. A decision was made that since the Independence boys long jump and javelin competitions had completed trials that those results would count as the final result in those events.

Passaic Tech had easily won the boys meet 170 1/2-116 over Bergen Tech and the girls 220-160 over Clifton.

But the Independence meets were in flux.

When the scores were totaled, Lakeland's girls had held off Wayne Hills 131-120 with all events complete.

Lakeland led Passaic Valley, 135-134 1/2, and PV had the league's best relay waiting to run.

After much discussion throughout Thursday, Lorenzo Baratta, the Indian Hills AD and the conference liaison for track and field, released a statement late Thursday night.

"After consultation with the Big North Executive Committee, it was determined that due to a sudden weather event and in the best interest of all of the athletes, co-championships will be awarded to Lakeland and Passaic Valley," the statement read.

The statement was released too late to reach head coaches Conforti and Joel Thornton of Passaic Valley.

It is believed that the decision was made to cancel the remainder of the meet due to the closeness to Saturday's Passaic County meet and next week's two-

day sectional and the difficulty in getting an appropriate time for the six schools to complete the meet.

If the meet was to be resumed, it would have included the long jump and javelin finals in addition to the 4-x-400 relay.

Standouts from the Independence and Liberty divisions

Liberty Boys: Holt, Ricketts, Baptiste and Gomez weren't the only standouts from this star-studded division.

Bergen Tech senior Jordan Nelson sizzled over the 110 high hurdles, running a North Jersey leading 14.85 seconds to beat the field by more than a hurdle. He also won the high jump at 5-10, below his seasonal best. His athletic skills made some wonder why Bergen Tech hadn't taken advantage of his speed as a wide receiver during football season.

"We didn't throw the ball much," said Nelson, who lives in Hackensack.

Nelson credits his father with getting him to get out of the house when the full quarantine was lifted and stay active during the pandemic.

"I tried to go to the track in Hackensack a few times but they shut it down, so he convinced to get out of the house and get after it," said Nelson.

And he certainly did in the hurdles.

"When I started running track, the seniors were the guys who ran the varsity hurdles, but they treated the newcomers like family," said Nelson, who will attend Morehouse College in Atlanta next fall. "I just wanted to carry on that tradition."

Clifton junior Jacob Heredia continued to prepare for what could be a classic showdown with Pompton Lakes senior Nathan Armstrong in the Passaic County meet, running an easy looking 1:59.16-4:21.69-10:13.71 distance triple.

The two figure to match up in the 800 and 1,600 at the Saturday, May 29 meet.

Liberty girls: Clifton had most of the individual standouts in this division, with three girls each scoring triples.

Nahioly Almonte won the 200 and triple jump and took second in the 100 and Mia Dubac won the 1,600 and 800 races handily. But the busiest Mustang was junior Katie Kakascik, who won the finals in the 100 and 100 hurdles in personal best times of 12.94 and 16.59, respectively, was fourth behind Almonte in the 200 and lost the long jump by 1/2 inch, after just fouling a pair of huge jumps.

"I felt really good (on the jumps) and I'm so close," said Kakascik, who has recovered from a broken foot that cost her most of the winter 2020 and threatened her spring (until the pandemic shut everyone down). "Soccer season helped me get back into shape and I'm excited for the rest of this season."

Kakascik does four events in nearly every meet, as the Mustangs have great quality but limited depth, with turnout down significantly over recent seasons, because of the pandemic residuals.

"It's easy to do in dual meets, but it gets tiring and difficult as the competition gets better," she says. "But I've been training all year for this time of the season."

Independence Boys: Fair Lawn's Alexander Kislenko remained unbeaten in the 100 with a sizzling personal best of 11.08. He also won the long jump with a best jump of 20-2 1/2 in the trials.

Lakeland's TJ McCormack won the shot (49-6 1/4) and discus (154-1) over the strong efforts of Wayne Valley's Gavin McGarrity and Fair Lawn's Tami Kabiawu in what may have been the best rivalry of the spring. He also took the rain-shortened javelin title.

Passaic Valley junior Jessier Soriano also impressed, winning the 400 hurdles in a big personal best of 57.40 and winning a thrilling 800 with Ryan Pena of Wayne Valley in 2:00.99. He was all set to anchor the Hornet 4-x-400 relay when rain and lightning stopped the meet.

Independence Girls: Kyra Blakeslee first started running track at Wayne Recreation when she was seven or eight years old. More than a decade her motivation is the same as it was when she was a little girl.

"I'm motivated to get better every time I compete," said the Wayne Hills senior.

That made things even tougher when the pandemic shut down her junior season. The motivation of a long career of running had disappeared, at least for the moment.

But Blakeslee found a way.

"I just went out and trained on my own," said Blakeslee, who easily won the 100 and 200, the former in a personal best time of 12.98 and took second in the long jump with another personal best of 16-6 1/2. "Thanks to my coaches, who kept pushing us to stay in shape and gave us workouts to do, and my sister Talia who went out and trained with me."

The sisters (Talia is a junior) ran on the Patriots' third place 4-x-400 relay as the team battled unbeaten Lakeland to the final event before losing by 11 points.

Lakeland's Angelina Perez seems to have been around forever. But the junior distance star is actually in her first season of outdoor track and is still a comparative novice on the track despite being one of the state and nation's top cross-country runner.

Wednesday she ran personal bests of 4:54.38 for 1,600 and 10:32.62 for 3,200, missing county records by 1.05 and 1.02 seconds, respectively. Both

marks are within the top 5 in New Jersey this year. Teammate Abigail Horevay was second in both races, running 5:20.76 in the 1,600, also a personal best.

Hailey Romero won the shot and javelin and with teammates Melissa Viellette, Rachel Schmitt (who won the discus) and Sophia Joyce led the Cutters to 62 of a possible 72 points in the throwing events.

Lakeland had similar success in the jumps with soph Shannon Hartnett winning the high jump and long jump and senior Katie Bennorth winning the triple. The duo and junior Hannah Boorse combined for 50 points in the throws to 12 for runner-up Wayne Hills.

Final League Meet Performance List

Top five performers in each event

BOYS

100: 1. Fabian France, Bergen Catholic, 10.91; 2. Keshon Holt, Passaic Tech, 10.92; 3. Adrian Taffe, Bergen Catholic, 11.00; 4. Alex Kislenko, Fair Lawn, 11.05; 5. Tom DeLorenzo, River Dell, 11.17.

200: 1. Donovan Anderson, Bergenfield, 22.34; 2. Holt, 22.59; 3. Justin Napier, Westwood, 22.65; 4. Taffe, 22.79; 5. France, 22.87.

400: 1. Jordan Ricketts, Passaic Tech, 49.24; 2. Holt, 49.70; 3. Hensley Jean-Baptiste, Passaic Tech, 50.25; 4. Matisse Bloem, Fort Lee and Lukkas Londono, Cliffside Park, 50.35.

800: 1. Jacob Heredia, Clifton, 1:59.16; 2. Jessier Soriano, Passaic Valley, 2:00.99; 3. Quinn McCutcheon, Ridgewood, 2:01.70; 4. Sean Fortunato, Ridgewood, 2:01.82; 3. Thomas DiVincent, Ramapo, 2:02.34.

1,600: 1. Heredia, 4:21.69; 2. Fortunato, 4:23.07; 3. Jay Boogaert, Ridgewood, 4:29.90; 4. Mick Barbi, Ridgewood, 4:31.87; 5. Michael Lustberg, Fair Lawn, 4:34.30.

3,200: 1. McCutcheon, 9:46.72; 2. Boogaert, 9:47.29; 3. Alex Horgan, Ramapo, 9:54.40; 4. Jacob Wolmer, Tenafly, 9:58.30; 5. Bobby Hymans, Ramapo, 10:04.80.

110 HH: 1. Jordan Nelson, Bergen Tech, 14.85; 2. Connor Munson, Westwood, 15.19; 3. Max Weinberg, River Dell, 15.26; 4. Red Kossick, Ridgewood, 15.41; 5. Kyle Case, River Dell, 15.80.

400 IH: 1. Ricketts, 55.37; 2. David Kriz, Bergen Tech, 56.64; 3. Ryan McKenna, Ridgewood, 56.9; 4. Soriano, 57.40; 5. O'Dell Holland Fincher, River Dell, 58.39.

Shot put: 1. VeRon Garrison, Dwight Morrow, 59-2 3/4; 2. TJ McCormack, Lakeland, 49-6 1/4; 3. Yosue Gomez, Passaic Tech, 47-9 1/4; 4. Jack Reneghan, NV/Old Tappan, 47-9; 5. Mohammad Abedrabo, Clifton, 47-6.

Discus: 1. Daniel Mikay, NV/Demarest, 166-1; 2. Hassan Bailey, Hackensack, 156-2; 3. Joseph DeCroce, NV/Demarest, 155-8; 4. McCormack, 154-1; 5. Patrick O'Neill, NV/Old Tappan, 151-11.

Javelin: 1. Alex Ust, Bergen Catholic, 161-6; 2. Kevin Ryu, NV/Old Tappan, 154-9; 3. George Kalkanis, Mahwah, 154-6; 4. Matt Vercelli, Ridgefield Park, 151-5; 5. Dylan Heany, NV/Old Tappan, 146-9.

High jump: 1. Munson, 6-2; 2. Zachary Madison, Northern Highlands, 6-0; 3. Seven tied at 5-10.

Long jump: 1. Donovan Anderson, Bergenfield, 21-3 3/4; 2. Louis Frye, Paramus Catholic, 20-9 3/4; 3. Ebanks, 20-7 1/4; 4. Holt and Kenny Uchida, Tenafly, 20-5 1/2.

Triple jump: 1. Anderson, 45-7 3/4; 2. Marvellous Basse, Dwight Morrow, 43-9; 3. Frye, 43-4; 4. Cole Goodman, Bergen Tech, 43-0; 5. Sam Zayer, Pascack Hills, 42-3 1/4.

Pole vault: 1. Max Zuckerman, Pascack Hills, 15-0; 2. Munson, 14-0; 3. Four tied at 12-0.

4-x-400 relay: 1. Fort Lee, 3:29.88; 2. Westwood, 3:32.33; 3. NV/Demarest, 3:34.00; 4. Ramapo, 3:34.65; 5. River Dell, 3:35.65.

GIRLS

100: 1. Oluwatamilore Adedeji, DePaul, 12.48; 2. Alysia Spencer, Ridgewood, 12.66; 3. Abigail Dennis, NV/Old Tappan, 12.72; 3. Rebecca Beaver, Tenafly, 12.77; 4. Olivia Grace, Ridgewood, 12.84; 5. Katie Kakascik, Clifton, 12.94.

200: 1. Spencer, 25.96; 2. Dennis, 26.15; 3. Molly Bennett, Northern Highlands, 26.23; 4. Izzie Anzaldo, Ramapo, 26.30; 5. Grace, 26.58.

400: 1. Bennett, 58.85; 2. Amanda Mircovich, River Dell, 58.96; 3. Claire O'Keeffe, Ramsey, 59.79; 4. Anzaldo, 60.07; 5. Cara Hliboki, NV/Old Tappan, 60.50.

800: 1. Lucia Rabolli, Ridgewood, 2:18.81; 2. Kimi Quayle, NV/Demarest, 2:19.98; 3. Lily Dipple, NV/Demarest, 2:20.20; 4. Sarah Policano, Ridgewood, 2:20.38; 5. Megan Schneider, Ramapo, 2:20.75.

1,600: 1. Angelina Perez, Lakeland, 4:54.38; 2. AnnaMarie Tretola, Ridgewood, 5:05.87; 3. Policano, 5:07.17; 4. Lily Williams, Ridgewood, 5:08.33; 5. Allison Lounsbury, Indian Hills, 5:10.59.

3,200: 1. Perez, 10:32.62; 2. Allen, 11:14.60; 3. Casey Walter, NV/Demarest, 11:16.99; 4. Claire Hamlet, Ridgewood, 11:42.58; 5. Tretola, 11:43.32.

100 HH: 1. Hannah Brodsky, Ridgewood, 15.79; 2. Christina Hughes, Northern Highlands, 15.87; 3. Natalie Jackson, Ramapo, 16.00; 4. Belle Bennett, Northern Highlands, 16.35; 5. Julia D'Amico, Ramsey, 16.49.

400 IH: 1. M. Bennett, 63.58; 2. Rabolli, 67.56; 3. Hailey Pataki, Northern Highlands, 67.67; 4. Katharine Cottone, Passaic Valley, 68.26; 5. Anne Noonan, Passaic Tech, 68.47.

Shot put: 1. Casey Sullivan, NV/Demarest, 41-2; 2. Brynn Madonna, Northern Highlands, 40-4 1/2; 3. Ciara Donegan, Holy Angels, 37-8; 4. Briana Thomas, Paramus Catholic, 37-7 3/4; 5. Julietta Ambartsoumian, NV/Demarest, 36-8.

Discus: 1. Madonna, 113-7; 2. Ambartsoumian, 111-7; 3. Rylie Theuerkauf, Tenafly, 109-0; 4. Tyaja Thomas, Paramus Catholic, 107-2; 5. B. Thomas, 103-6.

Javelin: 1. Niki Woods, NV/Demarest, 141-9; 2. T. Thomas, 123-2; 3. Hailey Romano, Fair Lawn, 121-10; 4. Melissa Viелlette, Fair Lawn, 119-5; 5. Lindsay Arone, Ramapo, 118-11.

High jump: 1. Alexandra Manetovic, Fort Lee, and Caitlyn Kunisch, Northern Highlands, 5-2; 3. Norina Khanzada, Tenafly, 5-0; 4. Gretchen Haray, NV/Demarest, Shenez Morales, Ridgely Park and Gloria Lee, River Dell, 4-10.

Long jump: 1. Shannon Harnett, Lakeland and Lee, 17-4; 3. Madison Libby, IHA, 17-0; 4. Rachel Hippolyte, Paramus Catholic, 16-11 1/2; 5. Saniya Brown, Passaic Tech, 16-8.

Triple jump: 1. Lee, 35-7; 2. Hippolyte, 35-1 1/2; 3. Manetovic, 34-9; 4. Essence-Jade Springer, Paramus Catholic, 34-4 1/4; 5. Katie Bennorth, Lakeland, 34-1 1/2.

Pole vault: 1. Jordan Hecker, NV/Demarest, 11-0; 2. Randi Conroy, Northern Highlands, 10-6; 3. Five tied at 10-0.

4-x-400 relay: 1. Ramapo, 4:05.22; 3. Northern Highlands, 4:07.95; 3. NV/Old Tappan, 4:11.44; 4. River Dell, 4:12.45; 5. Ridgewood, 4:13.87.

Paul Schwartz covers high school track and field for NorthJersey.com. For full access to live scores, breaking news and analysis from our Varsity Aces team, subscribe today. To get breaking news directly to your inbox, [sign up for our newsletter](#) and [download our app](#).

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