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HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS**

## **South Jersey cross country sectional titles decided**

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Before the start of the race, Haddonfield coach Nick Baker and star runner Jon Vitez made a decision.

Playing it safe was out.

Haddonfield High's Jonathan Vitez (left) is leading a pack during a Group 2 boys meet Saturday during the South Jersey Cross-Country Championships. Vitez finished first.



"He was going to stay back with a pack a little, maybe save a little for the next couple of weeks," Baker said. "But then I said, 'Just run your race.'"

Vitez' race was the best of a long day of cross country at Delsea. The Haddonfield senior won his third consecutive South Jersey Group 2 championship in a blistering time of 15 minutes, 24 seconds. Vitez' winning time, which helped Haddonfield capture its sixth consecutive sectional title and 10th in 11 years, was the fastest in all four groups. Toms River North's Joe Kotran won the Group 4 meet in 15:25. "I didn't feel all that great but I ran a good race," said Vitez, whose time matched the Group mark set on this course by Haddonfield's Chris Platt in 2002.

In other individual highlights, Kingsway senior Chelsea Ley won her third consecutive Group 3 meet in 17:33, the fastest time for girls, and Haddonfield's Marielle Hall won her fourth straight Group 2 title in 17:52. Lenape freshman Natalia Ocasio was a surprise winner of the girls' Group 4 meet in 18:24. "I never thought I could win," Ocasio said.

Kingway's Ley passed out shortly after the race and was attended by trainers. She said later she was fine. "I knew something was wrong the whole race," Ley said. "When I was crossing the finish line I was seeing all these colors so I knew something was going to happen." Highland junior Megan Venables ran a strong race and finished second to Ley in a time of 17:43. "She's such a good runner," Ley said of Venables. "She's great to run with."

Hall's time was her best in this meet by nearly 40 seconds. "It was good to get out there and get in a rhythm," Hall said.

Haddon Township's Jacob Walter won the Group 1 race in 16:51, and the Hawks won their second consecutive sectional title, edging Pennsville in a tie-breaker based on the top sixth-place runner. "The team has been pointing toward this day," Walter said.

Seneca's girls used a strong team effort led by third-place finisher Lyndsy Horn to capture its second straight Group 3 title. "We were confident we could do this as a team," Horn said.

Delsea placed four girls in the top seven, led by Felicia O'Donnell at second and Ashley Deckert at third, to beat Haddonfield for the Group 2 team title. "The girls were determined to run their best," Delsea coach Linda Marchese said.

Pitman senior Shona Potrzuski won the Group 1 meet in 20:29 and led the Panthers to the team title. "We all wanted to go out and do our best and we may have done that," Potrzuski said.

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