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Bulldawgs 4th in boys' meet

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It all fell apart in a hurry Saturday morning at Holmdel Park.

The anticipated Meet of Champions trophy coming home to South Jersey was simply not meant to be for Haddonfield's boys' cross country team this season.

Despite another successful campaign in which the Bulldawgs won a fourth straight Group 2 state title, the Meet of Champions championship remained elusive for coach Nick Baker's club, whose only title in this event came in 2001.

Don Bosco Prep won its second title in three seasons and third overall with a meet low of 78 points. Christian Brothers Academy (86), West Windsor-Plainsboro North (118), Haddonfield (128) and Westfield (161) rounded out the top five.

On this history-making day, West Windsor-Plainsboro North's Joe Rosa set a course record in 14:56 for the 3.1-mile race while 11 runners finished under the 16-minute mark, snapping the old record of eight in 2003.

Senior Jon "Boo" Vitez finished as Haddonfield's top placewinner with a fifth place showing in 15:42. Vitez lost out on the fourth spot when CBA's Mike Mazzaccaro (15:41) raced past him at the finish line.

Juniors Ben Potts (28th, 16:22) and Matt Nussbaum (29th, 16:22) were the next highest finishers, but the Dawgs' fourth and fifth runners finished well off the mark at 85th and 88th respectively.

Don Bosco Prep, on the other hand, had three finishers in the top 25 -- Rafel Vargas (12th), Mike Belgiovine (13th) and Howard Rosas (21st). Its Nos. 4 and 5 runners each placed in the top 75, sealing the triumph.

The fourth place team finish by Haddonfield proved a disappointment.

"We just didn't get the times we needed out of everyone, I guess it's that simple," said Baker. "Some days we clicked well as a team, other days we didn't. We just didn't have it today, and everyone must show up on race day."

"We came here to win this and of course we're disappointed," said Vitez, the Group 2 state champion. "We just didn't have our best today."

Potts, a junior who will be one of the team leaders next season, said the Dawgs lost a golden opportunity.

"We were pretty focused coming in, but if we ran our normal times, we could have won this," said Potts.