



Haddonfield boys finish 4th in Meet of Champs

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FOR THE INQUIRER

HOLMDEL, N.J. - Before Saturday's NJSIAA cross-country Meet of Champions at Holmdel Park, Haddonfield had accomplished all but one of its season goals. Winning the Meet of Champions title for the first time since 2001 would cap a perfect season for the Bulldogs.

But in a highly competitive team race, Haddonfield finished a disappointing fourth with 128 points behind champion Don Bosco Prep (78), Christian Brothers (86), and West Windsor-Plainsboro North (118).

"We're disappointed. Winning this meet was a major goal of ours," Haddonfield coach Nick Baker said. "We ran all right. The kids gave a good effort and gave their best, but it wasn't enough. We just had to be quicker. "I said before the race that some team was going to have to step up today, and Don Bosco was that team. They ran a great race, and we tip our hats to them. I'm hoping we learn from this, because we're better than we showed today."

In the individual competition, West Windsor-Plainsboro North's Joe Rosa became the first runner ever to complete the 3.1-mile Holmdel course in less than 15 minutes. Rosa, whose twin brother Jim finished second, clocked a time of 14 minutes, 56 seconds, shattering the mark of 15:04 he set earlier this fall in the Shore Coaches Invitational. The previous Meet of Champions record was 15:16, set Colts Neck's Craig Forsy in 2006.

Haddonfield was led by senior Jon Vitez, who was fifth in 15:42.

"Those guys [Joe and Jim Rosa] kicked my butt today," Vitez said. "I tried to stay with them and get ahead a bit, but they are too good. In retrospect, I could have run a faster time if I stayed back with the pack. I wanted to run under 15:30 today. I ran my race and gave it what I had to try to win.

"I felt good out of the woods, but they kept grinding it out. They're machines. I never thought I'd see 15 [minutes] broken on this course."

Haddonfield's second runner, junior Ben Potts (28th, 16:22), was disappointed, but positive. "You have to hand it to Don Bosco. They ran a great race today," Potts said. "Personally, I was looking to go 16 low, but my time was OK."

The results:

Team scoring: Don Bosco Prep 78, Christian Brothers 86, West Windsor-Plainsboro North 118, Haddonfield 128, Westfield 161, Southern Regional 177, Millburn 188, Toms River North 202, Ridgewood 203, Ridge 206.

Individual leaders: 1, Joe Rosa, WWPB, 14:56 (course record, betters own 15:04, 2009; meet record, betters 15:16 by Craig Forsy, Colts Neck, 2006). 2, Jim Rosa, WWPB, 15:15. 3, David Oster, Verona, 15:30. 4, Mike Mazzaccaro, Christian Brothers, 15:41. 5, Jon Vitez, Haddonfield, 15:42. 6, Patrick Schellberg, Delbarton, 15:47. 7, Morgan Pearson, Delbarton, 15:47. 8, Tyler Udland, Millburn, 15:50. 9, Patrick Rono, Lyndhurst, 15:55. 10, Paul Szulewski, Williamstown, 15:57. (Other South Jersey runners in the top 50: 20, Philip Fanz, St. Augustine, 16:14. 25, David Forward, Shawnee, 16:19. 28, Ben Potts, Haddonfield, 16:22. 29, Matt Nussbaum, Haddonfield, 16:22. 36, Connor Herr, Shawnee, 16:28. 44, Steven Burkholder, Cherokee, 16:45)