

# GREATNESS

Haddonfield boys make claim after winning 4th state title in a row

BY GUS OSTRUM • COURIER-POST STAFF •  
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**HOLMDEL** — The Haddonfield High School boys' cross country team took a huge stride Saturday toward closing out its reign as one of South Jersey's best ever in the sport.

As expected, coach Nick Baker's Bulldogs easily won their fourth straight Group 2 state championship Saturday at Holmdel Park, sweeping the first three places and grabbing four of the first five spots to finish with 30 points. Runnerup Delaware Valley was left in the dust with 124 points.

Senior Jon "Boo" Vitez won his his third straight state title in 15:57.

He was followed closely by teammates Matt Nussbaum (second, 16:30), Ben Potts (third, 16:32) and Colin Baker (fifth, 16:38).

The Bulldogs hope to cap their glorious era by winning the second Meet of Champions title in school history Saturday at Holmdel Park. Haddonfield last won the M of C crown in 2001.

"We were putting out some great performances today," coach Nick Baker said. "Everyone was all geared up for a big day. They couldn't wait to get started, and they really put on a nice show. You can see these young men improving with each meet."

Never was that more apparent than with Nussbaum, a junior who soared all the way to second place in the biggest race of the season. He placed 14th in the meet a year ago.

"Coach Baker stressed to us all season that we needed to show improvement with each meet," Nussbaum said. "That's what we focused on. Just do better than the previous race. Train hard and do what you have to do to step to the next level."

Vitez, meanwhile, handled the rainy, muddy conditions well to win a third straight state championship in Group 2. He will lead Haddonfield into a showdown with Christian Brothers Academy (CBA) and Don Bosco Prep on Saturday.

CBA, which was upset for the Non-Public A crown by Don Bosco, is ranked No. 1 in the state by the Web site NJrunners.com, while Haddonfield is second.

"They're all excited about the opportunity," Nick Baker said. "Boo (Vitez) ran a great race today. He didn't let up once. He and Colin (Baker) have been friends since they were little kids, so they're certainly looking forward to closing out their careers on a positive note in the Meet of Champions."

Haddonfield was the lone state champion from South Jersey.

In Group 1, Haddon Township and Pennsville never seriously challenged eventual-champion Robbinsville. Pennsville, led by Ben Moyer (22nd) and Tyler Cummings (23rd), finished fifth.

In Group 4, Shawnee and Cherokee never mounted their expected challenges for the team championship. Westfield (133 points) ran away with it, while Shawnee (11th), Cherry Hill East (12th) and Cherokee (13th) finished well behind. Williamstown's Paul Szulewski placed fifth in the individual competition in 16:09.

In Group 3, Ocean City finished fifth in the team race with 174 points. Junior Miles Schoedler was the Red Raiders' top runner, with an eighth-place showing in 16:43.



Matt Nussbaum took second place to help Haddonfield to another state cross country title.  
(KEITH J. WOODS/Gannett New Jersey)