



Montclair Cross Country: Mounties place in sectional, head to groups



The Montclair cross country team poses with their medals and coach Daryl Washington after the North 1 NJSIAA sectionals where the boys took third and girls, fourth. Both squads will compete in the group championship.

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by Andrew Garda

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GARRET MOUNTAIN—Last Saturday, the Montclair High School cross country teams did something they've rarely had the opportunity to do. Both the Mountie girls and boys teams punched tickets to the NJSIAA Group IV championships in the same year.

The Mounties boys did so by placing third in the field of 18 teams, while the girls finished fourth in a field of 16 schools at the NJSIAA North I, Group IV sectional meet Saturday.

They did it in rough conditions as well.

“Very tough,” head coach Daryl Washington said of the conditions. “But you know, it’s been a tough season, so it’s good they are showing this effort.”

There had been a lot of rain the night before, soaking the grass and turning dirt into mud — treacherous conditions for a 5,000 meter run which tests competitors even in the best of conditions. It was also very windy and cold, and runners had to stay warm so they wouldn’t end up with a strained muscle or a cramp early in the race.

“I know there were a lot of issues — health issues, the wind and the course itself — but the kids came out here

and did what they had to do," Washington said. "So I'm proud of them."

The boys were led by Stefan Urquidi's 10th place finish. Urquidi, whose time was 17 minutes, 8.0 seconds, finished right on the heels of Bergen County Tech's Evan Demoleas. Not far behind Urquidi was junior Aidan Ward, placing 17th and Stefan's brother Sebastian, who finished 22nd.

The girls were led by Meghan Hessler, who recently finished second in the Sectionals at Brookdale Park. Hessler placed 15th on Saturday, with Eleanor Keating not far behind in 19th. Hessler had a time of 20:41.0 with Keating ending up with a time of 21:00.00. Lola Scarpone finished 25th and Tildy Ferguson ended up in 33rd.

For Washington, the success was a testament to some of the changes the team has made in terms of training this season.

"Some of the things I've been trying to say are starting to click. It's like being a parent. You tell your kids over and over again, and you start seeing things advance, eventually."

Washington is especially proud of the toughness the team has shown at all levels this season, which has led to what he feels is a special year.

"I think between the SECs, Counties and now this, it's been a record season for us," he said. "There's never been an opportunity where both the girls and the guys have both won SECs, both placed high at Counties and now both moved on at Groups as a whole. It's good. I'm proud of them."