

Ramapo sets relay record

Boys 4-x-800 team shines on big stage at Penn Relays Friday. **95**

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Bobby Hymans of Ramapo runs in the 4-x-800 small school relay at the Penn Relays on Friday. Ramapo ran 8:09.02, a school record. CHRIS PEDOTA/NORTHJERSEY.COM-USA TODAY NETWORK

Ridgewood's Baginski returns to place in mile

Senior gets Penn Relays medal he had been pursuing for four years

Paul Schwartz

North Jersey Record
USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW JERSEY

PHILADELPHIA — A year ago, Will Baginski battled through the 1,600-meter leg of the distance medley at the Penn Relays, feeling a sharp pain in his back and suspecting his season was over.

Friday night, after waiting out two weather delays and running in a steady rain, the Ridgewood senior stepped on the Franklin Field track for the first time in a year and got the Penn Relays medal he had been pursuing for four years.

"I ran a pretty decent race as a freshman (in the 4-x-800) then I dropped the baton (in the 4-x-400) as a sophomore. Last year I knew I had a problem and my season might be over," said Baginski, who finished fifth in a tactical high school mile race in 4:20.12. The race was won by Foster Malleck of Kitchener, Ontario in 4:18.20, the slowest winning time in 53 years.

"I've run in a bunched up race like this before but never with so many other kids," said Baginski, who ran a speedy 58 second last lap, in a wild eight man dash to the finish. "It might not have been the smartest plan because there were so many quality kids, but I'm satisfied with my race and can't wait for my next one."

Neither can Passaic's Luis Peralta, but perhaps for different reasons. For three laps he seemed to have the race exactly where he wanted it.

Peralta took the lead from the opening gun and promptly slowed the race to a quick trot, going through the 400 in 66 seconds and 800 in 2:16, probably 8-10 seconds slower than normal in a high quality race.

He still held the lead at the three quarter mark, in a pedestrian 3:20 and then he started to move.

But so did everyone else in the race, and while he still ran a 60 second last lap, he finished eighth in

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Ramapo shines at Penn Relays

4-x-800 relay team sets school record on big stage

Paul Schwartz

North Jersey Record
USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW JERSEY

PHILADELPHIA — Ramapo ran 8:09.02 in the trials of the 4-x-800 relay Friday and was thrilled. Bergen Catholic ran nearly four seconds faster in the same race and was disappointed. Luis Peralta of Passaic ran the ninth fastest split of the day and nobody even noticed.

That's the nature of the early morning race that starts the second of three days at Penn Relays. Throw in a deluge of rain right before the runners take the track and anticipation and anxiety becomes distraction and release.

Ryan Verhoog of Ramapo had the right attitude. The senior hurdler, running just his third 800 race, led off for the Green Raiders and immediately found himself in the back of the 14 team pack.

"I just wanted to keep everyone else from having the trouble of trying to pass me," he joked.

Verhoog held it together and passed the stick to senior Mike Caldiero in 11th. Caldiero, ran a solid 2:01.74 for his leg and closed on several teams. Sopho-

more Bobby Hymans then split 2:02.21 to keep the Green Raiders in it, and then senior Justin Pecore ran a personal best 1:58.90 passing two teams and nearly a third.

The 8.09.02 clocking broke the school record and got the team looking forward to running even better as the season continues. What made it even better was that it was Ramapo's first trip as a 4-x-800 entrant.

"It was a great experience, and walking into this huge stadium is the coolest part," said Caldiero.

"This was definitely a confidence builder for us," said Pecore. "We're going to go faster."

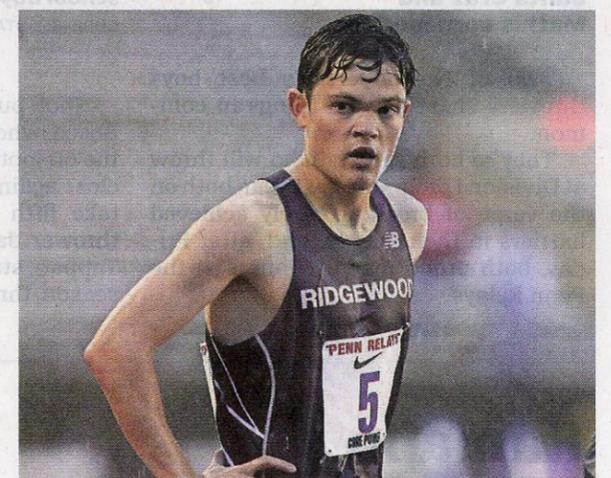
By contrast, Bergen Catholic, despite an 8:05.55 clocking, knew that they had missed an opportunity.

"We just weren't on today," said leadoff Jack Welch. "It was still a good experience and I think it's going to help us later in the season."

Anchor Braedon Fiume, who had the third fastest split of the heat in 1:57.14 brought the Crusaders to fourth, but BC still ran nearly four seconds slower than its qualifying time.

It was also Passaic's first 4-x-800 appearance and

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Will Baginski of Ridgewood catches his breath at the end of the boys mile championship on Friday. CHRIS PEDOTA/NORTHJERSEY.COM-USA TODAY NETWORK

Penn Relays

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4:21.19.

"My plan was to sit on the leaders and kick it in," said Peralta. "But I forgot about the plan as soon as the gun went off."

Peralta struggled for about 100 meters midway through the final lap and then regained his composure.

"But it was too late, and the guys in front of me were too good," said Peralta, the defending outdoor national champion. "I tried to kick but it was too much."

Santa Cruz and Mathis earn medals

Two of North Jersey's best boys throwers share several things in common.

They're both seniors who will throw at Division I programs next year, both on the verge of breaking rarely achieved barriers in their events, and, after Friday, both proud medal winners at the Penn Relays.



Will Baginski of Ridgewood (5) and Luis Peralta of Passaic (4) start the high school boys mile run championship at the Penn Relays on Friday.

CHRIS PEDOTA/NORTHJERSEY.COM-USA TODAY NETWORK

Shot putter Connor Mathis of Don Bosco, who's been knocking the door of the 60 foot barrier since last June, came close again Friday, throwing 58-10 1/4 to take fifth in his event, while javelin thrower Jason Santa Cruz of NV/Old Tappan, stalking the 200 foot mark this season, threw a major meet best 192-8 in

the javelin for fifth in his event.

They grabbed their medals in distinctly different ways.

Mathis moved into fourth place on his third throw, slipped into fifth when Nikolas Hyde of Somerset, Pennsylvania threw 58-11 on his last throw and had to wait out a long toss by Mason Ellis of

Clemons, North Carolina on his last attempt which measured 58-8 1/2.

Santa Cruz slid into the finals in eighth place with a solid throw of 184 on his third attempt, then moved to ninth at the beginning of the last round, and then threw a major meet on his last throw, improving by nearly nine feet.

"I tried to stay composed even though the weather wasn't great," said Mathis, who qualified last in the field of 15 and battled through flu that restricted his practice and competition for a week and a half. "I'm not really thinking about because I know I'm working hard and when it comes it comes, but I'm really excited to get a medal today."

Mathis will throw at Wake Forest next year.

Santa Cruz admitted that he was happy to just make the Penn Relays field this year but as the competition went on, his resolve strengthened.

"When the guy knocked me into ninth, it increased my determination," said Santa Cruz, who will throw at Monmouth. "I just got out there, gripped it and ripped it. I'm pretty confident in my mechanics; I trusted what I did to get here and just let it go."

Ramapo

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the Indians ran a respectable 8:11.88. But the Indians were well back after three legs and Peralta, who would later run the mile, went out hard in 53 seconds for the first 400 and then shut it down, still splitting 1:54.88 for his leg, ninth best of the meet.

Notes and quotes

The mini-wheel plaque awarded for winning a heat of the high school 4-x-400 at the Penn Relays is a coveted trophy.

And for NV/Old Tappan and Holy Angels, winning races for the first time Thursday was a huge achievement.

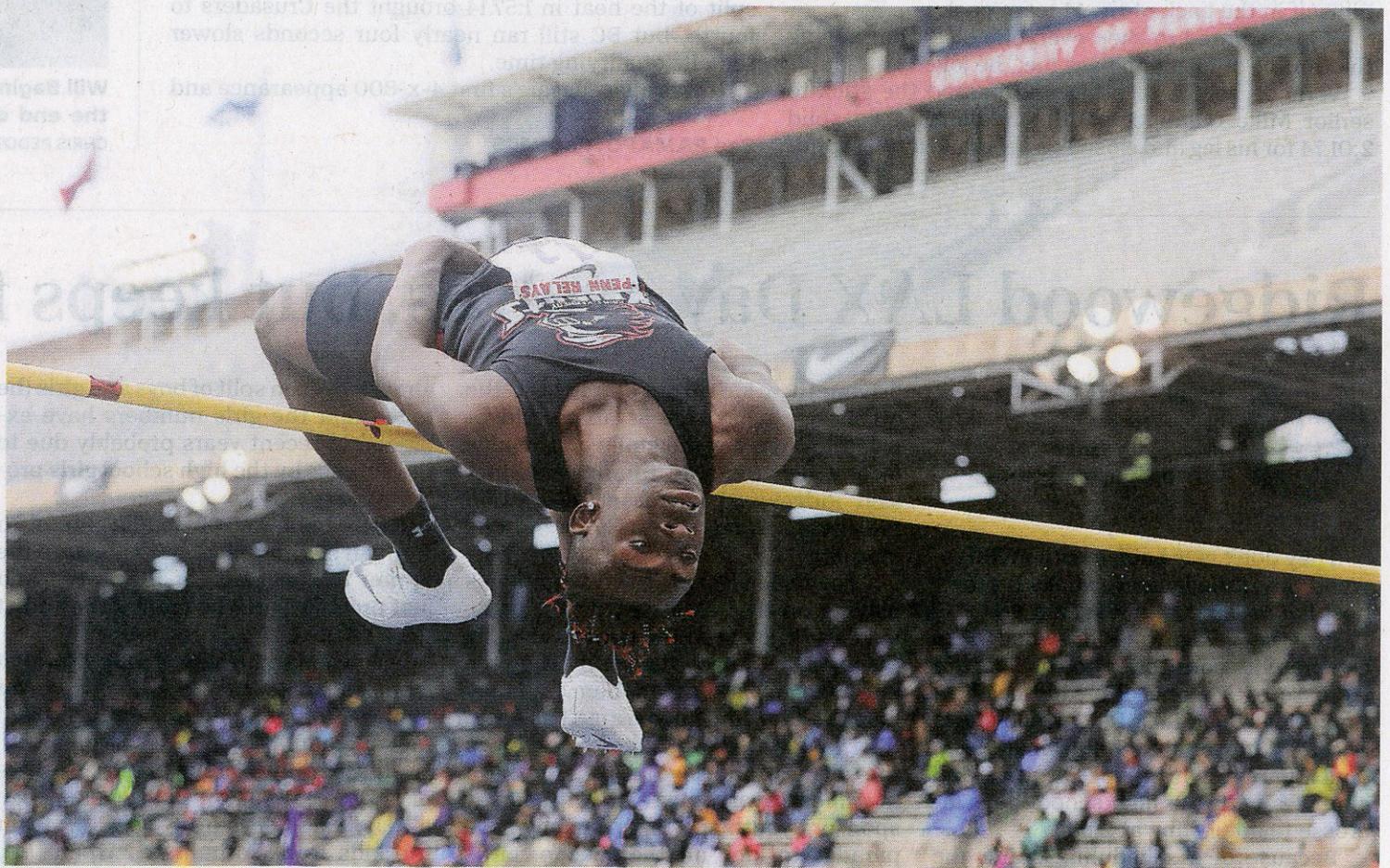
For the Waldwick girls, winning medals for the first time is as big a thrill.

The Warrior 4-x-400 team of Sloane Irwin, Jill Reynolds, Samantha Stallard and Kelly Moran were third in their heat and are the proud possessors of a quartet of bronze medals.

"Coach (Eric) Weizmann gave us this goal during the winter and kept hammering it at us," said Irwin after the Warriors held off sectional rival Wallkill Valley in an exciting finish.

Waldwick was in the mix throughout the race, and Stallard, better known as a hurdler, put the Warriors into third right before handing off to Moran, the only true 400 runner in the race.

Moran, who ran the best split of the race (63.33), moved into second midway through her leg but then was passed back, ending up about five meters ahead



Jamier Wright-Collins of JFK Paterson makes a successful attempt in the high jump at the opening height of 6-3 1/2. He ultimately finished 12th in the event. CHRIS PEDOTA/NORTHJERSEY.COM-USA TODAY NETWORK

of Wallkill Valley.

"It was motivating to be out there, competing for something that was a goal of ours," said Stallard, a favorite to win the 100 hurdles at the NJIC Patriot meet Monday.

Jamier Wright-Collins of Kennedy

made his opening height of 6-3 1/2 in the high school high jump, but missed at 6-5 and finished 12th (and second best New Jersey) in the event.

"He had three good jumps at 6-5 but missed all three," said Kennedy jumps coach Blake Rosen. "He's a little down

but hopefully he'll be back here next year."

Matt Lange of NV/Demarest finished 17th in the discus, throwing 148-8, well below his best throw of 167-2 this season.