

An injury left him wondering if he'd ever win a sectional gold medal. Now, he's got 4



Behind Will Baginski (center, holding trophy), Ridgewood claimed this year's North 1, Group 4 title.

(JJ Conrad | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com)

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Will Baginski went from wondering if he'd ever win a sectional gold medal to winning four of them in a six-month span.

The [Ridgewood](#) star suffered a stress fracture in his lower back in mid-April last year, costing the distance runner his postseason his junior year.

He was out roughly two months before even starting physical therapy and "didn't hit my full mileage" until September. He came back as good as ever indoors, though, to win sectional titles in the 1,600 and 3,200 before going on to claim a Meet of Champions title in the 1,600 in a career-best 4:12.90.

Now?

"I'm firing on all cylinders," Baginski said.

The Ridgewood senior bound for Dartmouth claimed individual North 1, Group 4 sectional titles Friday and Saturday in the 1,600 and 3,200, respectively. He won the 1,600-meter title in 4:22.70, edging out Memorial's Francis Martingale by a half second.

Barely out of the breath just moments after the winning the 3,200 on Saturday, Baginski was quick to find his two other Ridgewood teammates to congratulate them on their fifth- and sixth-place finishes to earn the team an additional three points.

Aside from some seeking personal redemption after missing state season one year ago, Baginski was determined to help get Ridgewood back on top in North 1, Group 4 after the Maroons missed out on the title by five points to West Orange last year, with Baginski watching from the sideline.

"That's why I'm out here running so many events," said Baginski, who also ran in the 800 on Saturday, taking third in a race won by Passaic's Oregon-bound Luis Peralta, as well as running a leg on Ridgewood's third-place 4x400 relay team. "It was tough seeing us go down last year and not being able to do anything about it. It was tough to watch."

This time, it was quite a different story at Clifton.

Behind Baginski's big weekend, Ridgewood reclaimed the boys team title in dominant fashion with 100 points, topping second-place finisher Passaic Tech (59.33) by more than 40.

He'll now leave Ridgewood as a decorated sectional champion, returning from an injury that previously left with him doubt.

As for his goals over the final two weeks of his high school career?

"I'd love to win another Meet of Champions title," Baginski said. "The competition outdoors is a lot tougher than indoors, so it won't be easy. But that's the goal."

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