

## CROSS COUNTRY

### Boys cross-country: North Jersey team-by-team previews for 2025 season



[Paul Schwartz](#)

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Get set for the 2025 boys cross-country season with Paul Schwartz's team-by-team previews.

#### Big North

##### American

**Cliffside Park** did not submit information

**Dumont** is led by league co-favorite, senior Karl Andre III and a strong junior class that includes all-division standouts Benjamin Sam and Brandon Peralta, Rylan DeCongilio, James Kelly and Noah Matlik. Senior newcomer Alberth Avila should be one of the Huskies top runners.

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**Dwight Morrow** has a large group of returning runners and might be a contender. Seniors Joseph Paul, Pharoah Naggie, Brandon Cooper, Tevin Lee and Nicholas Tolliver, junior Christopher Seo and sophs Chamin Kwon and Jaelen Asuncion give veteran coach Lisa Oden a possible contender.

**Fort Lee** is the defending champions and with four returnees should be in the hunt again this year. Senior John Walsh should be ready to make the next step and battle Dumont's Andre in a rubber match for the league title. Walsh is the defending champion and Andrew won in 2023. Senior Eitan Elhanavov and juniors Daniel Bolgov and Preston Leon also return and soph Skyler Kim is an exciting newcomer.

**Ridgefield Park** is led by a potential breakout star in junior Edgar Quetama but senior Kiev Bayona is the only other returnee. The Scarlets are rebuilding as a team but hope to get Quetama to the Bergen Meet of Champions and State Group 2 meet.

##### Freedom

**Hackensack** has the top returnee in the area in senior Mike McGinnity, who, if he can stay healthy, could win several titles after chasing the now-graduated Luke Pash of Ridgewood the last two years. Juniors Kevin and Jelson Remache and senior Joel Tenezaca also return.

The addition of senior track stars Devin and Dustin DeCambre with the development of soph Erick Cardenas, junior Jaredt Chavez and senior Saul Lliguisupa could put the Comets in position to win its first league title since 2010 and first sectional, since 1998.

**Northern Highlands** is a team to watch in a much more wide open division than usual. Seniors Ryan Dyki and Alex Kao and juniors Jack Leiman, Nik Maltezos and Ale Gabriel-Raspa are joined by one of the top sophomores in the area in Mats Knutzen. The results could prove interesting.

**Paramus** has only two returning lettermen, senior Drew Santos and junior Dylan Clark, but newcomers senior Darien Clark, junior Akiya Mizobuchi and a trio of talented freshmen should help the Spartans rebuild.

**Ramapo** has a lot of experience in juniors Zach and Jake Bernstein and senior captain Ryan Ficarra and Zach Bernstein should be a contender in many of the better races. The Green Raiders might be ready to qualify for the State Group 3 meet for the first time since 2011.

It's a weird year for **Ridgewood**, sectional winners in 13 of the last 15 seasons, and six of the last seven BMOG titles. The Maroons have no runners with varsity experience although junior Dean Ackley and senior Alexander Brown have varsity experience on the track. Seniors Remy Choe and Ben Soong also provide great leadership and had great summers. Whether Ridgewood can continue to contend this year depends largely on a sophomore quartet of Jack Barsa, John Hoffman, Akash Patel and Jacob Lin. But coach Patrick Ryan is confident his boys have learned what it takes to succeed from watching the veteran squad that is now off to college.

## **Independence**

**Fair Lawn** returns just one starter from last year's undefeated dual meet team in Aidan Rotondi and Joshua Yanez should be a competitive number two runner. The rest of the team are newcomers and the Cutters will rise and fall on their development.

**Lakeland** returns first team all-Passaic runners senior Evan Caldwell and freshman Daniel Seminara, and senior Jesse Freedman. Senior newcomer Zachary Raider could surprise and sophomore Micah Burt is improving rapidly. The Lancers are looking to turn last year's second place finishes in the league and Passaic County last year into firsts.

**Passaic Valley** has a small squad this year but senior Nico Flumenbaum, junior Elijah Paronia and sophs Jack and Colin Easterbrook should improve all season.

**Wayne Hills** returns five runners from a year ago, including senior All-Passaic star Wilson Stansfield and Santiago Gonzalez. The Patriots have an excellent group of sophs led by

Praneel Kumar, Joseph Alaya and Brandon Stone and add an interesting freshman in Landon Freaney.

It's a rebuilding year for **Wayne Valley** with only one varsity performer returning. Senior Aidan Barkley, junior Vansh Parmar, and sophs Gavin Magnolia and Pratyush Srivastava are the foundation for rebuilding the program.

**West Milford** returns four from last year's solid team, junior captain Matteo Balestrieri and seniors Noah Diodonet (also a captain), Ben Torres and Brody Scully and if freshman Griffin Kleinfeder develops quickly, the Highlanders should be equally good this year.

### **Liberty**

**Bergen Tech** looks like a team on the rise, with four solid upfront performers led by senior Eshaan Maggon, who had a breakthrough spring season and should be a contender in races all the way through the sectionals. Senior amal Kaplan, and juniors Nicholas Saldana and Aidan Kim give the Knights a strong front of the pack. A large and enthusiastic group of athletes will fill out the pack, with freshman William Henry an intriguing newcomer. The Knights should contend in the league and beyond.

**Clifton** returns five lettermen from a year ago including senior all-Passaic runner Anthony Pichardo, junior Leo Spoon and senior Christian Cabanilla. Senior Adrian Wilson-King is a first year runner who is an excellent swimmer and should help immediately. If the Mustangs, loaded with great students, approach the season as if it's an Honors course, veteran coach John Pontes thinks they can surprise.

**Eastside** did not submit information.

**Kennedy** returns Brandy Hernandez and Johan Secondino and hopes to win more than the one meet they won last fall.

**Passaic** did not submit information.

**Passaic Tech** did not submit information.

### **National**

**Bergenfield** seems to keep improving and producing outstanding runners and this year is no exception. Senior Jason Enrile is a contender for the Bergen County title and senior Sam Hill and juniors Aaron Campos Leon and Dalvin Mena Rodriguez are veteran contributors. Newcomers Brady Biggins, Dan Hill, Jordan Thomas and Ray Veloz will battle for varsity positions.

**Demarest** returns a top quartet of seniors Amadeo Bonde, Skye Lee, Markus White and junior Charles Kakkanatt from last year's team that won league and county group titles and lost the sectional by one point. Senior Liam Kenny and freshman Rafael Bonde should give the Norsemen a shot at the Triple Crown this fall.

**Old Tappan** did not submit information.

**Pascack Valley** has one of the top runners in North Jersey in Marcus Koshy. The Panthers hope to surround him with runners like seniors Brian Slasinski and Sean Flynn and junior Connor Iwata can work together to provide an improved team.

**Teaneck** is light on experience with only senior Dereck Coleman returning. Sprinter Justin Johnson could be an interesting newcomer, but the Highwaymen need more.

**Tenafly** returns just two starters in seniors Fady Temimi and Matan Peleg. The Tigers look to Vincent Scolaro and Calvin Du for improvement as they develop camaraderie and work ethic.

## **Patriot**

**Indian Hills** has a terrific returning junior core with all North Jersey honoree Frank Coppa, Ethan Gray, Lukas Kertesz, Chris Vigeant, Matt Mazur, Andrew Finale and Robbie Woodward the mainstays of the team. The Braves won the sectionals and were second in State Group 1 last year and could be a contender for the state title this year. They'll be in the mix at every meet they run. Soph Kaeden Kraft will also play a vital role.

**Mahwah** has a strong number one in senior Nick Lencsak and the Thunderbirds have four other varsity runners returning.

**Pascack Hills** returns two varsity runners in Tyler Lovett and Alfonso DiPopolo but junior varsity runners Aiden Schmidt, Christian Lee, Jake Farrar and Ryan Hughes have improved to the point when the top six runners are interchangeable.

**Ramsey** could be a dark horse team for big improvements this year. The Rams return junior first team selection Declan Finnegan and seniors Colin Dougherty, Jalen Hu, James Lepori and Quinn Hassan are also veterans. The Rams add some intriguing newcomers, including one of the areas top intermediate hurdlers in junior Giorgio Bruttini, junior Andrew Grunfelder and freshman Loukas Flarankos.

**River Dell** did not submit information.

**Westwood** has a small turnout this year and returns just seniors Kaiden Gilroy and Luke Baumgartner. Senior newcomer Derek LeManquais joins freshmen Owen Gomme and Thomas Koch and everyone hopes to reach personal best goals as they become a team.

## **United**

The return to full health of juniors Preston Neal and Ayden Mendez should make **Bergen Catholic** a very good team again. Seniors Dylan Brown and Luke Schoeler and juniors Ben Cha, Jack Falcone, and Jackson Hermann provide great backup on the varsity and sophs Paul Alzapiedi and Emerson De La Roca provide varsity depth. The Crusaders have a deep freshman team and more than 50 runners on the roster.

**DePaul** should be improved with junior returnees Adrian Consuegra and Evan Liranzo and soph Jax Miranda-Correia and newcomer (from soccer) Jack Coppa.

**Don Bosco** is likely to win its 18th BMOG title this fall, breaking a tie with Ridgewood for the most boys crowns. And while the senior-laden team obviously would relish that, the Ironmen's real goal is to return to the State Meet of Champions for the first time since 2016. Seniors Jacob Pullen (committed to Eastern Kentucky), Matt Maguire (headed to Binghamton), Ryan Pelosi and Owen Hickey and junior Matthias Fontao are a potent top five especially if Hickey is fully healthy. Junior Blake McCarthy and freshman Dan Telofski are promising varsity newcomers.

**Paramus Catholic** did not submit information.

**St. Joseph** has its deepest and best team in years with eight experienced runners among the 30 athletes who reported. Seniors Darren Coyle and Joe Lizzi and junior AJ Villeda are the leaders and senior Jack Boyle, sophs Dean Tsocanos and Billy Boyhen and junior newcomer Jayden Papasavas are working hard to turn potential in success.

## **NJIC**

### **Colonial**

**Becton** celebrates the 100th anniversary of its first cross-country team (The school was East Rutherford High School until 1971) with a great freshman turnout and leadership from seniors Gabriel Cespedes and Kalel Zenteno-Prado and junior Alan Alfaro.

**Dwight-Englewood** is rebuilding with only junior Sebastian Chang returning but a strong freshman turnout bodes well for the future.

**Elmwood Park** did not submit information.

**Garfield** returns just junior Bartosz Groch from last year's team but newcomers, senior Joaquin Ponce and juniors Alexander Ramos and Santiago Elias should keep the Boilermakers at or near the .500 mark.

**Glen Rock** returns two mainstays from a year ago in senior Neil Saxena and junior Kacper Majewski and hope to find enough talent in newcomers and underclassmen to compete at a high level by the end of the season.

**Harrison** did not submit information.

**Leonia** returns five starters from last year's improved team led by senior all-North Jersey hopeful Calvin Daou. Seniors Isaac Mutumba, Luis Gonzalez and Aquila Bernal and junior Jeremy Garcia all got league recognition a year ago. David Grandison and Augustin Do will battle a deep level of up-and coming runners for the final two varsity spots.

Junior Jacob Espiritu and soph Jean Carlos Cespedes are **Lodi's** top returning runners. Newcomer Aidyn Colquhon will add depth.

**Lyndhurst** has six returnees from 2024 including lead runners, senior Aidan Nogueira and junior Gabriel Campos, both all-division first team performers a year ago. The Golden Bears should compete for league, Bergen County group and state sectional spots.

**Manchester** did not submit information.

**Rutherford** has a lot of experienced returnees in seniors Saleem Day and Johnny Amatucci, both all-division performers and senior Aaden Abadilla. If they can develop depth, the Bulldogs could cause trouble in the league and state sectionals.

## **Meadowlands**

**Butler** is led by sophomore Fernando Bautista.

**Eastern Christian** did not submit information.

**New Milford** has a strong top five with senior Jonah Checko, juniors Evan Kozlowski, Jacob Chacko and Leandro Paulino and soph Sawyer Hotto. The Knights can win the division again if they stay healthy and develop some depth.

Kevin Blackford has taken over as the head coach at **North Arlington** and welcomes four returners from last year. including senior Caleb Scott and juniors Ian Soto and Alex Blazquez.

**Palisades Park** has three spirited returnees, senior Demetrios Lakkas, junior William Shales and soph Rham Hwang and will provide leadership to a young group of runners.

**Park Ridge/Emerson** is a solid pack team with five runners returning from last year's undefeated dual meet team. Seniors Matthew Burns, Matt Tortora and David Alvarez all received all-league honors last year. Junior Henry Thayer was a first team all-league

selection and fellow 11th graders Jonathan Caviello and Sam Bermudez provide depth. If someone can join Thayer near the front of the pack, PRE should be dangerous again.

**Pompton Lakes** did not submit information.

**Saddle Brook** is hoping to surprise some people and with senior Nelson Ehirim and juniors Dylan Rios, Luca Cappello and Nikolas Pinto returning joined by newcomers Christian and Jordan Crews and Adam Kandil stepping up, the Falcons could be a divisional threat.

**Saddle River Day** returns junior Misha Theberge, sixth in State Non-Public B a year ago and an SMOC qualifier. The Rebels have a smart, hardworking team behind him that should get better during the season.

**Secaucus** has a deep experienced team with 12 seniors in all, plus an excellent JV and freshman team that will come in handy in a busy schedule. Seniors Dominic Vargas, Yash Sachanandani, Co-Captains Yonden Sherpa and Kyrolos Awad, Maxwell Donaldson-George and junior Josh Torres. The Patriots could be contenders to win the league, North Hudson and state sectional titles and should return to the State Group 1 meet for the 9th time in 10 years.

#### **Patriot**

**Bogota** returns its top six runners from a very good team that finished a close second to a powerful Hasbrouck Heights in league and sectional competition. Seniors Emmanuel Marin, Hussain Salam and Zohaib Syed are all potential college runners and juniors Ray Ehrmann, Ernesto Santana and soph Ethan Schwarzenbach comprise a solid pack.

**Cresskill** has a lot of depth, but no real standout and should be in the first division again. Soph Brandon Kopczynski and junior Matthew Fannin are the leaders and soph Gabriel Kim is ready to take the next step to contention.

It's a rare rebuilding year for **Hasbrouck Heights**, who returns only senior Vincent Zou from last year's Triple Crown winning team. The Aviators also count on senior Christian Rosario and soph Anvar Asat as they try and maintain a winning record.

**Hawthorne Christian** did not submit information.

Paul Marino moves up from assistant to head coach at **Midland Park** and with senior Nick Piemontesi recovered from injury, the Panthers should have a full team at every meet.

**Passaic Charter** did not submit information.

**Ridgefield** is led by junior returnee Ryan Tuero and has a lot of newcomers, including six talented and enthusiastic freshman and three new cross-country runners who ran well last spring, Manny Blanco, Matthew Inagaki and Songmin Lee.

**St. Mary's** did not submit information.

**Waldwick** returns an excellent upfront trio of Matthew Carver, Aidan McNamara and William Mangler and with Ian Dodwell should be a contender in the division and Bergen group race.

**Weehawken** did not submit information.