

TRACK

Boys track and field: North Jersey's 25 best athletes of the last 25 years



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From the 2000-01 winter season through the spring of 2025, North Jersey boys won 68 gold medals at the State Meet of Champions and 424 individual state group championships in the winter and spring track and field seasons.

They also set 46 of 60 individual Bergen and Passaic records.

Whew!

That's why, when choosing the best track and field athletes of the past 25 years, it would be a disservice to pick just one for each event. Since these selections go across both seasons, we decided to pick the 25 top athletes regardless of event, though every event is represented on this list.

The criteria considered were, in order of importance: Performance at the SMOC (multiple gold medals earned extra credit), performance at state groups (gold medals were essential), other major meet titles, and times at major championships. Performances at various national meets were considered as tiebreakers.

Jack Attali

Demarest sprinter/hurdler/jumper, Class of 2023

Attali is the only athlete on this list without an SMOC title, either indoor or outdoor, but he belongs here for his magnificent performance in leading Demarest to its first state title in nearly 60 years. He won the group title in the 200, took second in the 110 hurdles, third in the 400 hurdles and anchored the third-place 4-x-400 relay team.

He set a Bergen County 110 hurdles record in taking second at the SMOC and also placed in two other events. He's now a junior and excelling at TCNJ.



Shaquan Brown

Kennedy sprinter/hurdler, Class of 2006

Brown was a phenom who seemed to save his best moments for big occasions. He won the 2005 spring SMOC 200 as a junior after missing his Group 4 400 race, where he was heavily

avored. He won the 2005 indoor SMOC 400, but was injured after winning both the 400 and 400 hurdles at 2006 sectionals.

He held the national record in the indoor 600 for nearly seven years and the state record for nearly 20. He still holds Passaic County records in four events and ran one of the fastest 400 splits in Penn Relays history. He went on to run at the University of Louisville.

Corey Crawford

Indian Hills long jump, Class of 2010

A multi-talented athlete, Crawford gave up baseball and became North Jersey's first 25-foot long jumper. He won the State Meet of Champions and Group 2 state titles in the long jump as a senior and was clearly the best jumper in a state that didn't crown indoor long jump champions until 2019.

Crawford also won major races at 100 and 200 meters, and the high jump, and ran a leg on the 4-x-800 relay at Penn Relays, nearly qualifying for the final. He went on to have a great career at Rutgers, where he holds the indoor and outdoor school records and was an All-American four times. He now coaches the jumps for the Scarlet Knights.

Colin and Will Daly

River Dell middle distance/distance, Class of 2016

Maybe their mom could tell the difference, but I never could. I won't separate them here either.

The Daly twins went 1-2 in the 2016 indoor State Meet of Champions, with Will winning. They combined for 28 of River Dell's 42 points for the Golden Hawks' 2015 Group 2 indoor state title, and 29 of the 64 points in the 2015 Group 3 outdoor state title. They helped River Dell repeat in both seasons in 2016.

Along with Patrick Robertson and Justin Fernandez, the twins won the 2016 SMOC 4-x-800 relay title. The duo also ran the first and last legs of the 2016 distance-medley relay that almost stole a Penn Relays championship. The two spent their college careers at Penn and Notre Dame.

Reynier Galvez

Passaic Tech 400/800 runner, Class of 2024

Galvez broke out of the pack with an outstanding fourth-place in the 800 at the 2023 spring 800. He placed second in the indoor 800 in 2024 before missing the early part of the spring

season with an injury. When he returned a couple of weeks later, he caught fire, winning Group 4 and nearly stealing the New Balance National title from an unseeded heat.

Last year, he won the National Junior College 800 title competing for Indian Hills Community College of Iowa.

Michael Ray Garvin

Don Bosco sprinter, Class of 2025

Garvin was a beast. The speedy football star was a terrific two-sport athlete at Don Bosco who breezed to the 2005 State Meet of Champions 100 title and finished second to fellow honoree Shaquan Brown of Kennedy in the 200.

Garvin went on to play football and become an All-American cornerback and sprinter at Florida State. He played one year in the NFL with Arizona Cardinals.

Owen Keating

Pompton Lakes pole vault, Class of 2025

It took 44 years for a North Jersey boy to win a spring SMOC title in the pole vault until Eric Geider of Demarest won in 2013. The winter schedule added pole vault in 2005 but it only took 12 years for a first North Jersey victory there. Since those firsts, five spring champions and four winter titlists have come from Bergen and Passaic counties.

Keating became just the second boy to win each when he cleared North Jersey records of 16-6 indoors and 16-3 outdoors. He joined his sister, Emma as a state champion. He'll jump at Binghamton next year.



Mohamed Khadraoui

Kennedy distance, Class of 2005

Khadraoui won the 2003 indoor Group 4 and SMOC 3,200 titles seemingly without contest. But after winning the outdoor 3,200 Group 4 title, he finished fourth in the SMOC. He came back with an even better 2004, winning two memorable battles with Chris Pannone of Hunterdon Central indoors and blowing away the field outdoors en route to the Group 4 and SMOC titles.

He took second at the Penn Relays 3,000 and then set the North Jersey 3,200 and two-mile records, running 8:53.74 for fifth in the two mile at Nationals. He went on to become a two-time Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference champion at Iona.

Kyle Levermore

Don Bosco distance, Class of 2014

Levermore's junior year was legendary, capped by his spectacular win at the State Meet of Champions 3,200. Injuries and struggles at the longer distance forced him to run the 1,600

rather than defend his 3,200 title the following year, so he ran the shorter race and won that too.

He was part of the 2013 outdoor and 2014 indoor four-mile relays that earned All-American honors. He went on to run at both Oregon and Arkansas, and was part of Arkansas' SEC cross-country championship teams in 2016 and 2017. He's now the cross-country coach at the University of Missouri.

Jaden Marchan

Leonia long sprinter/hurdler, Class of 2024

Marchan played basketball in the winter his first three years in high school but went full-time runner as a senior with one of the most remarkable seasons in state history. First, he broke the state record at 600 meters that Shaquan Brown had held since 2005, beating future Olympian Quincy Wilson in the process. Then he broke the Bergen County indoor 400 mark and won the state title.

Outdoors, he broke the Bergen 400 record multiple times, and earned All-American honors in the 400 and 400 hurdles. He ran on the Trinidad and Tobago 4-x-400 relay in Paris last summer and is entering his sophomore year at Georgetown.

Ben Malone

Pascack Valley middle distance, Class of 2013

Malone's high school career was legendary. He won an outdoor SMOC 800 title, an indoor 1,600 title, a Millrose Games mile title, had a near miss at the Penn Relays mile, set a state record at 1,000 meters indoors and won a National championship indoors at 800 meters and sprint medley. He even won races at 400 and 3,200 meters.

Malone went on to run at Villanova, where he earned All-American honors on the distance-medley relay and won multiple Penn Relays titles. He's one of just five sub-4 milers in North Jersey history.



Liam Paneque

Demarest long and triple jump, Class of 2025

Like his predecessors as Bergen County long jump record holders, Darius Pemberton and Corey Crawford, Paneque was a multi-talented athlete with successes in all three jumps, the high hurdles and even as part of a state medalist 4-x-200 team.

He won seven group titles, two outdoor long jump titles, three triple jump titles and two indoor high jump titles, leading his team to four state group titles. He took four SMOC titles, including two in the long jump and one in the triple jump indoors, and the 2024 long jump crown outdoors with a Bergen record leap of 25-2. He's headed for the University of Virginia, where he's expected to eventually become a decathlete.

Luke Pash

Ridgewood middle distance/distance, Class of 2025

Pash seemed to combine the grit and determination of Kyle Levermore, the racing talent of Ben Malone and the speed of Luis Peralta. He had a magnificent high school career,

winning 1,600 and 3,200 SMOC titles outdoors, two 3,200 indoor titles and capping his career with a state record (for high school races) of 4:03.02 in the mile.

He holds the Bergen County indoor 3,200, outdoor 1,600 and mile records, and had one of the top 800 times of the year for good measure. He'll run next year at North Carolina and might be the next sub-4 runner from North Jersey.

Pat Passalacqua

Old Tappan thrower, Class of 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic had a big impact on North Jersey track and field history, denying some athletes a chance to add to their legacies in the spring of 2020.

Passalacqua was the dominant thrower in winter of 2020, winning the SMOC by a foot. He likely would have repeated in the spring. He went on to become an all-Ivy League athlete at Columbia in both football and track.

Brad Paternostro

Ramapo middle distance, Class of 2011

After a good sophomore year, Paternostro burst into prominence early in his junior campaign with a spectacular 800 anchor leg at the Bergen County Relays to win the sprint medley. He went on to win the SMOC title that spring.

As a senior, he stood out all year before being upset at the state 800 by fellow North Jersey star Patrick Rono of Lyndhurst and finishing second. He went on to excel at Princeton University.



Jabrill Peppers

Paramus Catholic sprinter, Class of 2014

One of the most charismatic athletes in Bergen County history, Peppers, who started at Don Bosco before transferring during his sophomore year, was one of the best in both football and track.

He is the only sprinter in state history to go back-to-back in both the 100 and 200 at the State Meet of Champions. A star at Michigan on both sides of the ball, he is entering his ninth year in the NFL this fall and is currently with the New England Patriots.

Luis Peralta

Passaic 2019 middle distance runner

Like Paternostro, Peralta came into prominence with a spectacular early-season sprint medley performance as a sophomore. The soft-spoken standout went on to a sensational career, winning a pair of outdoor SMOC titles at 800 outdoors and another one indoors.

He holds Passaic County records indoors at 800 and 1,000 meters and won a national 800 title outdoors in 2018. Peralta qualified for the U-20 Worlds for the Dominican Republic and was a multi-time All-American at the University of Oregon, where he was part of a world-record distance medley team.

Chris Phipps

Lodi jumper, Class of 2008

He wasn't the first 50-footer in New Jersey, but he held the state record for five years after his record 50-5 triple jump at the Bergen Meet of Champions in 2008. It was the capper of a rapid rise, going from a 19-foot long jump and a 41-foot triple jump as a sophomore to a season that saw him lose just three times in 14 long and triple jumps two years later.

His only losses as a senior were a third place finish in the SMOC long jump, a third at the Penn Relays triple jump and a second place at the Nike Nationals triple jump. He went to an amazing career at the University of Nebraska, where he earned All-American honors seven times.

Patrick Rono

Lyndhurst middle distance, Class of 2011

What he did on June 9, 2011 almost defies description. On a hot, stifling day when the heat and humidity made the real feel well over 100 degrees, one SMOC title would have been amazing. But Rono won two, the 800 and 1,600, both in personal record times and both over great opposition.

He went on to win four SEC titles at Arkansas and was named All-American four times.

Benji Shue

Bergen Catholic thrower, Class of 2025

As a youth national shot put and discus champion, Shue came to Bergen Catholic as one of the most-anticipated athletes in North Jersey history. He didn't disappoint.

Shue set the Bergen County discus record in his third meet. By the time he was done, he had broken it seven times to a best of 205-4. He also set the Bergen County shot put record at 69-2, won six state group titles, won the SMOC discus title twice and won the New Balance Nationals discus title twice. He'll throw for the University of Texas.



Ken Sinkovitz

Bergen Catholic middle distance, Class of 2003

Sinkovitz's outdoor numbers were good – he won two Non-Public A 800 state titles and an SMOC medal – but there was no better runner undercover, which he proved in three consecutive 800 indoor SMOC races at Princeton.

He lost the first SMOC in a tight finish, won as a junior with a dive at the line (winning by .01 second), then won easily as a senior.

Joe White

DePaul 400/800 runner, Class of 2014

Like Crawford, White thought his future was in baseball until he got a taste of track and field in his junior year. His first indoor season didn't go well, but by the time the spring rolled around, he won the Non-Public A 800 title.

The following winter, White won the indoor SMOC from the slowest of three heats. After he was nipped in the outdoor SMOC, he finished second at Nationals with a personal-best and North Jersey-record 1:48.75 in the 800. He went on to have an All-American career at Georgetown.

Jamier Wright-Collins

Kennedy high jumper, Class of 2020

Wright-Collins had a strong case for inclusion in this list even before the pandemic struck. He won a pair of indoor Group 4 state titles in the high jump and cleared 6-10 routinely all winter, including winning the SMOC a week before the world shut down.

He had won the 2019 Group 4 high jump and placed second in the SMOC that spring. He had a great chance to be the second North Jersey boy to clear seven feet. He went on to play football at Rutgers.

Max Zuckerman

Pascack Hills pole vaulter, Class of 2022

It was one of the great moments in Bergen County track and field history, Zuckerman, down to his final vault at the 2022 State Meet of Champions, needed to become the first North Jersey vaulter over 16 feet to win the state title. When he cleared, the place went wild and Zuckerman hugged anyone he saw in a jubilant celebration.

That secured his place in North Jersey sports history and clinched his position on this list. He's entering his senior year at UConn.



Kaleb Zuidema

Midland Park javelin, Class of 2011

Few athletes have dominated their event for multiple years as much as Zuidema did from 2009 to 2011. He won three straight Group 1 state titles and, after taking third to Kevin Steimle of Mahwah as a sophomore, easily won the SMOC title the next two years.

He won the Penn Relays and Nationals in 2010 and held the state record for several years with a best of 224-1. It's still the Bergen County and North Jersey record, and he has the next 12 best performances as well.

Best of the rest

**denotes SMOC champion*

George Abyad, Passaic Valley shot put/discus (2007)

***Jack Ahart**, Kinnelon 400 (2023)

***Will Baginski**, Ridgewood 1,600 (2019)

***Rowan Clarke**, Teaneck triple jump (2002)

***Weston Daniel**, Bergenfield triple jump (2001)

***Ralph Davis**, Paramus triple jump (2003)

***James Dely**, Paramus Catholic high hurdles/sprints (2025)

***St. Jacob Diodonet**, West Milford 400 (2015)

***Eric Geider**, Demarest pole vault (2013)

Gio Gutierrez, Saddle Brook shot put (2017)

***Tyler Hrbek**, Old Tappan pole vault (2018)

***George Kalkanis**, Mahwah javelin (2023)

***Seth Kricheff**, Old Tappan pole vault (2017)

***Liam Landau**, Pascack Hills pole vault (2019)

Kyle Lindsay, Eastside triple jump (2006)

***James Malizia**, St. Joseph javelin (2002)

***Bobby Mays**, Don Bosco triple jump (2023)

***Jason Mezhibovsky**, Demarest pole vault (2017)

***Daniel Mikay**, Demarest discus (2022)

Stephen Mozia, Hackensack shot put and discus (2011)

***Steven Pierce**, Ridgewood javelin (2006)

***Jason Santa Cruz**, Old Tappan javelin (2019)

***Kevin Steimle**, Mahwah javelin (2009)

Jason Thobourne, Kennedy high jump (2017)

***Jadon Watson**, Kennedy high jump (2018)

***Sharif Webb**, Don Bosco 800 (2007)

Honorable mention

**denotes SMOC champion*

***Keshon Brown**, Kennedy (HH); ***Patrick Cole**, Hasbrouck Heights; **Maximus Daniels**, Indian Hills (hurdles); ***Gary Gagliardi**, Hasbrouck Heights (400/800); **Seven Garcia**, Hackensack (200/400/800); **Hunter Hayek**, Wayne Hills (100/200); ***Greg Hazell**, Don Bosco (long and triple jumps); **Jacob Heredia**, Clifton (1,600/3,200); ***Nicoy Hines**, Passaic Tech (HH); ***Vernard Hoover**, Hasbrouck Heights (long and triple jumps); ***Owen Horevay**, Lakeland (3,200); ***Garrett Kroner**, Indian Hills (400/800); ***Donald Lee**, St. Mary's (100/200); ***Ryan McCann**, Glen Rock (400/800); ***Damon Merkerson**, St. Mary (100/200/400/800); ***Kevin Momohin**, Queen of Peace (400 hurdles); **Greg Olsen**, Wayne Hills (shot put); ***Chris Pantale**, Wayne Valley (discus); **Greg Peloso**, Wayne Valley (javelin); ***John Porteous**, Wood-Ridge (100 and 400 hurdles); ***Marc Rienas**, Old Tappan (800/1,600); ***Paul Rosiak**, Wood-Ridge (discus/javelin); ***Val Sisti**, DePaul (long jump); **Carter Solloway**, Hawthorne (200/400); ***Javon Turner**, Paramus Catholic (high jump/100/200).