

Young Cherokee distance team shines at sectionals!!!

Reuben Frank, June 8, 2021 [sjtcaweb](#)

The future has already arrived at Cherokee.

The fastest freshman 3,200 at sectionals? A Cherokee runner.

The fastest sophomore 800 at sectionals? A Cherokee runner.

The second-fastest sophomore 1,600 at sectionals? A Cherokee runner.

Freshman **Nick Kuenkel** and sophomores **Conor Jacob** and **Patrick Ditmars** all PR'd at the South Jersey Group 4 sectionals, as did senior **Nico Grilli** in two events.

Cherokee was missing the leader of its distance team, injured senior **Brett Shea**, but his teammates picked up the slack and combined for 36 points (including the 4-by-8), even though none of the underclassmen ran more than one individual event.

Grilli, Shea, Ditmars, Jacob and **Kuenkel** were in the Chiefs' top group this past fall (along with senior **Dylan Odud** and junior **Bradley Poplar**), when Cherokee won the South Jersey Group 4 XC title and were ranked No. 8 in the state.

Let's take a look at how the weekend went for Cherokee's young distance team:

NICO GRILLI: The only Cherokee senior who raced in the 800, 1,600 or 3,200, Grilli dropped his PR from 4:27.90 to 4:20.63 with a third in the 1,600 and lowered his 800 PR from 1:58.14 to 1:57.44 for fifth place. He's the 6 seed in the 1,600 at states this weekend and No. 11 in the 800.

PATRICK DITMARS: Ditmars lowered his 1,600 PR from 4:29.35 to 4:20.15. He originally placed third behind Kyle Rakitis and Jackson Braddock but moved up to second when Braddock was DQ'd. The only faster sophomore in the state is Chatham's Ryan Beegle, who won North Section 2 Group 3 in 4:19.50. Overall, Ditmars is seeded fifth in Group 4. The only faster Burlington County sophomores in the last 20 years are Cinnaminson's Austin Gabay in 2018 (4:17.79) and Shawnee's David Forward in 2008 (4:18.46).

CONOR JACOB: Ran third in the 800 in 1:57.06 behind Rakitis and Braddock, lowering his PR from 1:58.86. He's the top sophomore in the state this year at 800 meters and seeded eighth overall at states. Jacob's 1:57.06 makes him Burlington County's fastest sophomore since Jacob Tyndale of Rancocas Valley ran 1:54.33 in 2016.

NICK KUENKEL: The top freshman two-miler in the state by 24 seconds, Kuenkel ran 9:34.50 for fourth at sectionals, becoming the fastest South Jersey freshman since Eastern's Dan Deichert ran 9:33.06 at Group 4 states at South Plainfield in 2000. Kuenkel is the No. 10 seed at states.

3,200-METER RELAY: Senior **Daniel Boria** and sophomore **Thomas Bromley** joined Ditmars and Jacob on the 3,200-meter relay team, which ran 7:59.94. That makes Cherokee the No. 1 seed at states.

Here's a look at the all-time Cherokee performance list at 800, 1600 and 3,200 meters!

800-METER RUN [1:57.0]

1:53.14 ... Dave Sitzler (Cherokee), 2000
1:54.53 ... Drew Viscidy, 2012
1:54.94 ... Colin Merrigan, 2012
1:55.3h ... Jaja Fisher, 1993
1:55.33 ... Marc Pelerin, 2001
1:55.41 ... Shawn Wilson, 2013
1:56.25 ... Ross Staudt, 2012
1:56.32 ... Mike Caputi, 2000
1:56.3h ... Aaron Boucher, 1998
1:56.3h ... Jeff Storch, 1998
1:56.53 ... Tyler Jackson, 2019
1:56.60 ... Brett Shea, 2021
1:56.5h ... Will Andes, 2005
1:56.8h ... Scott Weikel, 1990

1,600-METER RUN [4:22]

4:11.69 ... Shawn Wilson, 2013
4:11.86m ... Marc Pelerin, 2002
4:15.49 ... Steve Burkholder, 2010
4:15.52 ... Ethan Wechsler, 2019
4:17.38 ... Justin Kelly, 2018
4:18.43 ... Josh Joseph, 2000
4:18.83i ... Tyler Jackson, 2020
4:19.36 ... Jack Shea, 2017
4:19.80 ... Jeff Storch, 1988
4:20.15 ... Patrick Ditmars, 2021
4:20.61 ... Aaron Boucher, 1999
4:20.63 ... Nico Grilli, 2021
4:20.96 ... Chris Spisak, 2018

4:21.70 ... Nick Falk, 2017
4:22.0 ... Scott Weikel, 1990

3,200-METER RUN *[9:30]*

9:01.89 ... Marc Pelerin, 2001
9:04.05 ... Shawn Wilson, 2013
9:10.90 ... Ethan Wechsler, 2019
9:15.08 ... Nick Falk, 2017
9:16.61 ... Justin Kelly, 2018
9:17.19 ... Keith Krieger, 2003
9:19.44 ... Jack Shea, 2017
9:24.84 ... Alex Yersak, 2008
9:26.06 ... Joe Halin, 2000
9:27.84 ... Chris Spisak, 2018
9:28.6h,i ... Steve Burkholder, 2010
9:29.48 ... Chase Miller, 2019
9:29.89 ... Tom Yersak, 2004