

Upon further review, Cherokee wins 7th state Group 4 championship!!!!!!!!!!!!

Reuben Frank [November 5, 2022](#) [sjtcaweb](#)

After waiting an hour and 45 minutes for official results, then seeing that they placed 4th, Cherokee finally learned that they did indeed win another state cross country title.

Two hours after they finished their race.

The Chiefs won the State Group 4 Championship by nine points over Westfield, which was initially announced as the state Group 4 champion at Holmdel County Park. Meet officials omitted the results of Cherokee **senior Patrick Dithers** (sic.) in initially compiling the team scoring and posted the incorrect results, which showed Westfield winning the team title.

After Westfield started celebrating, meet officials removed those results and replaced them with corrected results showing Cherokee as the State Group 4 Team Champion.

The state title is the 7th for Cherokee, 10th-most in state history and 3rd-most ever for a New Jersey school, behind only Haddonfield [21] and Haddon Township [10].

Only Westfield has won more in Group 4 – 15 from 1963 through 2011 – but Cherokee held off Westfield 102-111 on Saturday, with Southern a close 3rd with 119 points.

On an unseasonably warm day at Holmdel, the boys Group 4 race was run in the thick of the mid—day heat, and the temperatures in the high 70s affected a lot of runners.

But it affected Cherokee the least, and the Chiefs won their second title in the last three times the race has been contested. They won in 2019 and there was no meet in 2020. Ridge, which won last year, placed 4th with 131 points.

Senior **Patrick Ditmars** placed 3rd in 15:59, junior **Nick Kuenkel** 5th in 16:08 for Cherokee and senior **Conor Jacob** 12th in 16:36. Junior **Robert Poplau** was 40th (30th in team scoring) in 17:17.

After four runners, Cherokee was sitting at 44 points [2-3-9-30] and Westfield had 62 [4-14-21-23]. Westfield's 5th runner placed 60th overall in 17:44 – 49th in team scoring – giving them a final total of 111 points.

The next Cherokee runner was a surprise. Sophomore **Anthony DiBatista** – who began the year running JV, first broke 19 minutes six weeks ago and has been Cherokee's 6th man the last few meets – ran 17:55 on a very challenging course in difficult conditions and finished just nine seconds behind Westfield's 6th man, taking 71st overall (58th in team scoring), giving the Chiefs the 9-point margin of victory.

Despite the conditions, Cherokee averaged 16:47 at Holmdel, 3rd-fastest of the day behind two Parochial A schools – CBA [16:06] and Union Catholic [16:32].

Cherokee won its first four state titles from 1997 through 2000, adding championships in 2007, 2019 and now 2021.