

Cherokee tops Cherry Hill East & Southern in tight battle between three N.J. top-15 teams!!!

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Cherokee packed its five scorers in 40 seconds Saturday and rolled to its 10th sectional title Saturday and second in a row.

Seniors **Nico Grilli** and **Brett Shea** led the way for the Chiefs, Grilli in 3rd in 16:28 and Shea in 6h in 16:33 over the water-logged 5K DREAM Park course in Logan Township.

The race featured three of the state's top-14 ranked teams going in: No. 6 Cherry Hill East, No. 11 Cherokee and No. 14 Southern Regional.

Cherokee outscored Cherry Hill East 48-63, with Southern third third on a 6th-runner tiebreaker with Cherry Hill East.

Cherokee went 3-6-11-12-16, Southern 1-4-14-21-23 and Cherry Hill East 7-8-10-18-20. Cherry Hill East had beaten Cherokee by three in the Olympic Conference Championships last month.

Sophomore **Patrick Ditmars**, senior **Dylan Odud** and sophomore **Conor Jacob** clinched the win for the Chiefs, Ditmars 11th in 16:53, Odud 12th in 16:54 and Jacob 16th in 17:08. Freshman **Nick Kuenkel** was Cherokee's sixth finisher, 19th in 17:16, and junior **Bradley Popler** also raced, taking 36th in 17:44.

This is the first time Cherokee has won consecutive sectional titles since 1999 and 2000, when the Chiefs won their fourth and fifth in a row. Cherokee also won SJ-4 titles in 2007, 2011, 2016 and 2019. The Chiefs went on to win the state title last year.

Cherokee's 10 sectional titles trails only Haddonfield [40], Haddon Township [20] and Cinnaminson [12] among South Jersey schools and is most among South Jersey Group 4 schools, three more than Cherry Hill East and Toms River North.