

Overall winner Nick Kuenkel leads Cherokee to huge Shore Coaches win over N.J. #2 Westfield!!!!!!!

Reuben Frank October 1, 2022

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Junior **Nick Kuenkel** was the overall winner and seniors **Patrick Ditmars** and **Conor Jacob** also finished in the top-10 as Cherokee upset New Jersey's No. 2-ranked team to win its first Shore Coaches Invitational team title in 19 years!

Racing in cold and wet conditions, **Kuenkel** ran 15:56 and became the seventh Cherokee runner to break 16 minutes on the 5,000-meter course at historic Holmdel County Park, edging Westfield's Avery Keith, a 9:12 two-miler, by three seconds. He's Cherokee's first individual winner at Shore Coaches in 20 years!

Ditmars ran 16:05 for 5th place, and **Jacob** placed 8th in 16:22. Junior **Robert Poplau** and sophomore **Liam Tindall** clinched the win, placing 31st and 35th in 17:19 and 17:24.

Cherokee, ranked 10th in the state, defeated Westfield 80-89 to win the Group A team title. Westfield went 2-9-21-23-34, *so the big difference was with each team's 3rd runner, Jacob gaining 13 places and 28 seconds ahead of Westfield's.*

Cherokee averaged 16:37, which is 2nd-fastest ever by a South Jersey school at Shore Coaches. Cherokee averaged 16:35 in 2019.

The team title is Cherokee's first at Shore Coaches since 2003, when the Chiefs outscored 2nd-place Hunterdon Central 65-96 with **Sean McLaughlin**, **Greg Bredeck**, **Tom Yersak** and **James Maneval** placing in the top 20. Cherokee also won Group A in 2000.

Kuenkel is Cherokee's first individual champ at Shore Coaches since **Keith Krieger** won the 2002 Group A title in 16:15. A year earlier, **Marc Pelerin** ran 16:00 to win Group A.

His 15:56 matches the fastest Holmdel time by a South Jersey junior since 2015, when Cherokee's **Jack Shea** ran 15:46 at the Meet of Champions.

Here's a look at the 10-fastest Cherokee runners at Holmdel:

15:40 ... Shawn Wilson, 2012

15:41 ... Ethan Wechsler, 2019

15:43 ... Marc Pelerin, 2001

15:45 ... Keith Krieger, 2002

15:45 ... Shawn Wilson, 2011

15:46 ... Jack Shea, 2015

15:56 ... Nick Kuenkel, 2022

16:05 ... Patrick Ditmars, 2022

16:09 ... Joe Halin, 1999

16:12 ... Justin Kelly, 2016