

Nick Kuenkel, Patrick Ditmars both run sub-16 to lead Cherokee to 24th County Open title!!!!!!!!

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Cherokee became the first school ever with two runners under 16 minutes in the same race at Mill Creek Park on its way to winning the 53rd annual Burlington County Open Friday. The title is Cherokee's 9th straight and 24th overall.

Junior **Nick Kuenkel** won the race in 15:51 and **Patrick Ditmars** was 2nd in 15:59, and Cherokee recorded a 38-64 margin of victory over 2nd-place Lenape.

Kuenkel's time is 4th-fastest in course history and faster ever by an underclassman. The previous course-best by an underclassman was Austin Gabay's 15:56 in 2018. Ditmars' time is No. 9 in course history.

Junior **Robert Poplau** placed 7th in 16:41, sophomore **Liam Tindall** 10th in 17:00 and senior **Daniel Hassall** 18th in 17:40.

They were backed up closely by 6th and 7th runners sophomore **Anthony DiBatista** in 19th in 17:42 and sophomore **Benjamin Weiner** in 21st with a 17:50. Cherokee raced without senior **Conor Jacob**, their usual 3rd runner. He's due back for the Olympic Conference meet Wednesday at DREAM Park.

Cherokee's 8th runner, sophomore **Luke Reistle**, ran 17:54 to win the JV race, fast enough for 22nd in the varsity race. Cherokee swept the top four spots in the JV race and seven of the top eight.

Cherokee also won County Open titles in 1988, 1989, 1995, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021.

Lenape was led by senior Colin Hermack, who placed 4th in 16:05, and sophomore Noah Manwaring, 8th in 16:41. Hermack's 16:05 is fastest ever by a Lenape runner at Mill Creek. The previous Lenape-best was Jake Boniva's 16:16 at the 2012 County Open.

Also in the top 10 were Cinnaminson senior Alex Boyko [3rd, 16:02], Cinnaminson senior Matt McCarron [5th in 16:24], Rancocas Valley senior Ryan Smith [6th in 16:37] and Shawnee junior Eli Mackey [9th in 16:56].

Boyko's time is 11th-fastest in course history and fastest 3rd-place time ever in a County Open at Mill Creek, and Hermack's is 14th in course history and fastest 4th-place time.

The Burlington County Open has been held at Mill Creek Park at 5,000 meters since 1984, other than 1994 through 1998, when it was held at Cherokee, and 2020 and 2021, when it was at the Rancocas Valley athletic fields in Eastampton. Numerous runners went under 16 on a 3.0-mile Mill Creek course that was used from 1981 through 1983.

There have been many minor adjustments to the 5K course since 1984, mainly in the stretch along the Rancocas Creek. But here's the all-time sub-16:10 list on the 5,000-meter layout with 100ths listed if they were recorded:

15:39.40 ... Austin Gabay [Cinnaminson], 2019 [1st]
15:43.?? ... **Keith Krieger [Cherokee], 2002 [1st]**
15:43.44 ... **Ethan Wechsler [Cherokee], 2019 [2nd]**
15:51.81 ... ***Nick Kuenkel [Cherokee], 2022 [1st]**
15:56.00 ... **Shawn Wilson [Cherokee], 2012 [1st]**
15:56.21 ... **Justin Kelly [Cherokee], 2017 [1st]**
15:57.46 ***Wechsler, 2018 [2nd]**
15:59.01 ... Michael Ungvarsky [Cinnaminson], 2016 [1st]
15:59.71 ... **Patrick Ditmars [Cherokee], 2022 [2nd]**
16:01.?? ... Jon Anderson [Cinnaminson], 2002 [2nd]
16:02.55 ... Alex Boyko [Cinnaminson], 2022 [3rd]
16:04.?? ... Dave Forward [Shawnee], 2008 [1st]
16:05.?? ... Bill Mason [Cinnaminson], 1998 [1st]
16:05.32 ... Colin Hermack [Lenape], 2022 [4th]
16:06.?? ... Steve Grabowski [Cinnaminson], 2005 [1st]
16:06?? ... Urie Ridgeway [Bridgeton], 1988 [1st, S.J. Group 3]
16:06.09 ... ****Chris Spisak [Cherokee], 2017 [2nd]**
16:07.?? ... *Eric Lorenz [Holy Cross], 1986 [1st]
16:08.?? Lorenz, 1987 [1st]
16:09.?? ... **Joe Halin [Cherokee], 1998 [2nd]**

