

Salute to Seniors: Ethan Wechsler of Cherokee HS

NJ Salute to Seniors

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What was your most memorable race?

When I won the group 4 state championship in cross country as a junior in 2018.

Who would you consider your biggest competition over the past four years?

The toughest competition over the past couple years has consistently been [Liam Murphy](#), [Kevin Antczak](#), [Jack Jennings](#), [Martin Riddell](#), and [Shaw Powell](#). But the person I clashed with the most during high school is definitely [Austin Gabay](#).

What was your personal greatest accomplishment?

My greatest accomplishment was being a captain junior and senior year along with being the first runner from my team every race senior year. I say this because I liked to lead and inspire the younger athletes on the team to aspire to greater achievements and become hardworking and more dedicated to running so that when I leave I know that I made a lasting impact on the team.

If you are writing a letter to your younger freshman self, what are some items that might include?

I would tell my freshman self to toughen up mentally and become more dedicated. When I was a freshman I could hardly finish a long run or a workout and had 20 excuses lined up in case anyone decided to question me. I really began to excel once I convinced myself that I could do something and consistently worked at my goals that I set for myself and worked at them tirelessly by pushing myself further than I ever thought physically possible.

What were the most difficult obstacles you had to overcome?

The biggest obstacle I had to overcome was not giving up on myself when I failed to advance to several meets during my sophomore year. My team was 7th at the group 4 meet and we missed Meet of Champs by one wildcard and then individually I placed 7th in the 3200 indoor sectional and 7th in the outdoor 1600 sectional.

Overall in my sophomore year I had been so close to success and narrowly missed the races where I could go against the best of the best. I was truly devastated after each of those races but it made me much stronger and when I returned for junior year I had improved dramatically and qualified to MOC for every remaining high school season.

What will you miss the most?

I will miss my teammates and coach the most. My coach, Stephen Shaklee transformed me into the runner I am today and the journey was not always pretty. He has seen me at my worst and at my best and consistently made me a better runner each season we had together and I am completely devastated that our time together was cut short.

I will also miss my teammates because they have been with me every step of the way and have become my best friends who I have shared countless miles with over the past 4 years and although I will continue to see them it makes me sad to think that we will never be racing in the same uniform side by side ever again.

What advice would you give to younger athletes?

Listen to your coach!!!! Most of them have been doing this a very long time and know what they are talking about and only want to see you succeed. I know so many people who spend their entire high school career not caring about something they already spend hours of their life doing and it makes absolutely no sense to me. If you're going to do something, it's best to do it right and work hard at it.

On that same note, dedication is everything!!! Your coaches love to see you put in hard work and hard work is necessary to ensure improvement. It may be difficult at first but you

have to challenge yourself and run with the people who will make you faster, not the people who you are good friends with and if you're lucky they are the same people.

What influence has your coach had with respect to your performance and overall life goals?

During one of my first days of freshman year I was doing a workout and Shak (my coach) told me to leave after I made up an excuse as to why I could not complete the workout. I look back on this moment and tell others about it a lot because I stumbled very much in the beginning of high school. But without this stumble I would never have achieved any of the success that I later did.

The next day Shak explained to me that I need to have a better attitude because I visibly always went into workouts and practice with a negative outlook that made the experience miserable for everyone around. I took what Shak said to heart and began to improve at workouts and runs just by simply changing my attitude towards the running. By approaching things this way in life I have become a completely different person and strive to succeed in all departments of life through a simple psychological change that Shak preached to me early on in high school which I will forever be thankful for.

Name the top New Jersey XCTF moment your have witnessed. Can be by level of greatness or just something that really stood out to you.

The top XCTF moment I witnessed is definitely when Liam Murphy beat Devin Hart in the MOC 3200 indoor 2019 and ran sub 9 at the bubble. Although I was in the race and technically did not "see" the moment, it was astonishing nonetheless and really proved that anyone can be taken down no matter their experience level or history of success.

What are your post-high school or college plans?

I will be attending [Syracuse University](#) and will continue to run Cross Country and Track.

Who would you like to say 'thank you' to?

Mom and Dad- for being my #1 supporters throughout this crazy journey.

Chase- for being an amazing friend and training partner throughout all of high school.

Bill Shea- for introducing me to the sport of cross country and contributing to all my success and the success of dozens of south jersey runners from the beginning.

Stephen Shaklee- for being the most amazing coach and one of the most influential figures in my life and the South Jersey running community.

Jeffrey Thompson- for being a great cross country coach and motivator and also teaching me the fundamental laws of physics.

Viscidy- for doing core with us in the weight room when no one else would and helping me put a chip on my spikes in Virginia.

Mrs. Quinn- for further contributing to my running career and developing me at some of the most vital times that contributed to my success before high school.

Coach Brien Bell- for allowing me to further my running career in college.

Anything else to add?

Believe in YOURSELF because no one else will until you do it first.