



BLUE DEVIL BOYS FINISH SIXTH IN 4X800 RELAY, SPF RAIDERS PLACE EIGHTH IN 4X100

Vikings Win 5, SPF's Baliatico Places 4th in 400H at MOC

By **DAVID B. CORBIN**
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Union Catholic High School athletes showed their muscle by taking top honors in three of the boys events and two of the girls events at the track & field NJSIAA Meet of Champions (MOC) at Frank Jost Field in South Plainfield on June 4.

Turning all heads were the efforts of Union Catholic Viking freshman Sydney McLaughlin, who captured first in the 100-meter hurdles with a time of

13.47, which became the new national age group record for 14-year-olds. The former record of 13.62 was set by McLaughlin in the trials.

Her brother Taylor, a junior, was one of the Viking foursome, that included Jordan Jimmerson, Kenny Evely and Oba Animashaun, who won the 4x400 with a time of 3:15.12. Taylor also finished second in the 400 meters with a time of 47.74.

"My brother just encourages me and pushes me to go harder

and do whatever I can. He says no matter what happens, he will never be upset with me. And everyone will support me no matter whatever happens," McLaughlin said.

McLaughlin also won the 400-meter hurdles with a meet record time of 56.91, shattering the former record of 58.44 established by Amber Allen of Passaic Tech in 2009.

McLaughlin, who indicated that the 100 hurdles is her favorite race, has always been quite aware that she should not allow such early fame and publicity get into her head.

"It shows that what I am doing now could definitely affect my

future. It pushes me and shows that if I am doing this as a freshman, in the future years, I will be able to go farther," she said.

Running in Lane 1, Scotch Plains-Fanwood Raider junior Tori Baliatico got the opportunity to keep her eye on her entire heat, including McLaughlin, and placed fourth in the 400 hurdles with a personal record time of 1:01.71.

"I have been training to work on pulling my trail leg and getting through the hurdles. Also Lane 1 was kind of an advantage, because everyone was [positioned] ahead on me, so I could pace myself and try to keep up with them. Both times, this week

and last week, I was in Lane 1 and I got my two best times that I've ever had," Baliatico said.

McLaughlin's achievements have also been quite an inspiration.

"Oh yes! She is ridiculous. She's so good," exclaimed Baliatico.

Her steps between the hurdles has always demanded a high degree of concentration.

"There are certain steps you have to have between hurdles. If you don't think you are going to make it over the hurdle, you have to bring your knees higher. Stutter stepping will cause your time to go down [get worse]," Baliatico said.

With her time getting closer and closer to that magic 60 sec-

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