

Athletes take their turn at watching coaches run races

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HADDON TWP.

Part of a coach's job is to maximize the potential of his or her athletes. With that duty often comes pushing, prodding, tweaking, and on some occasions, yelling.

Athletes, for the most part, aren't supposed to gripe about it. But with their legs sore and egos bruised, they often think "I'd like to see you do it."

At the 23rd Annual George Rowland Relays at Haddon Township High School on Saturday, several South Jersey teams had the unique opportunity to reverse the roles of coach and athlete.

For the past 15 years, the Rowland Relays have featured two coaches races: the co-ed 3,200-meter run and the co-ed 4x100 relay, all of which came about by accident.

According to meet director Ross Williams, a sixth-grade race once separated the 4x800 and sprint medley relays, but one year they forgot to include the race in the event.

"We needed something to run in between to give the girls a rest, so I grabbed some coaches and said 'Come on, we're racing,'" Williams said.

Cherokee assistant coach Chris Tarello, whose squad finished second in the 4x100 on Saturday, said the girls even made him warm up properly.

"They were yelling at me to 'Do your striders, do your drills, do your stretches.' The shoe's finally on the other foot for them," said Tarello, who is also the girls' cross country head coach. "On a weekend that the Penn Relays are the big thing, this sort of sets this meet apart."

And the girls' assessment of their coach's performance?

"He has good form, but he's old," said Cherokee senior Brandi Brockman. "Age has taken a toll on him. I mean look, he just got beat by a girl."

Kidding aside, Brockman said Tarello's advice is always heeded.

"Seriously though, he may be tough, but he knows what he's talking about," said Brockman, who ran in the Division 3 4x200. "He lives and breathes running. He's just old."

Schalick sophomore Nicole