

Burkholder blows away field in mile

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RALEIGH, N.C. — Intimidated? Lisa Burkholder?

Forget it. Yes, she's a freshman. But with the confidence of a senior.

And a county record to go with it. Burkholder, a Cherokee High School ninth-grader who never ran track until this year, won the freshman mile at yesterday's adidas Outdoor Championships at North Carolina State and broke the 13-year-old county record along the way.

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distance medley in 12:31.51.

The team of Malia Lyles, Emily Keller, Jenna Viggiano and Burkholder ran 12:31.51, sixth fastest in county history and fastest this year by any South Jersey school.

"I had a few hours in between, so it didn't really bother me," Burkholder said. "If they were closer together, it probably would have."

Burkholder played soccer last fall but is now a full-time runner. After a few weeks off, she'll start preparing for the cross country season.

"I'm done with soccer," she said. "I'm starting to realize how good I can be in track."

TRACK & FIELD

Burkholder covered the full mile in 5:01.94, which converts to 5:00.14 for 1,600 meters. She broke the Burlington County (and school) record of 5:00.73 set indoors in 1990 by Monica Olkowski and broke the meet record of 5:05.62 set last year by Sarah Bowman of Fauquier High in Warrenton, Va.

"I thought I could run close to five minutes and I didn't think anybody else could," said Burkholder, who was seeded fifth. "I was really, really nervous, but I was confident. I thought I could win and if I didn't I was pretty

sure I'd get second."

Burkholder, whose previous best was a 5:02.80 at the Meet of Champions 10 days ago, ran the second-fastest mile ever by a New Jersey freshman. Haddonfield's Erin Donohue ran 4:59.03 in 1999. Burkholder's time is eighth fastest in South Jersey history.

"Everything still hasn't sunk in," said Burkholder, whose PR was 5:15 a month ago. "I guess in a few weeks it'll all sink in what I did this year. Right now, I can't believe it. I'm really excited, but I don't think I've even started to realize everything I've done this year."

Her last couple races, Burkholder

has run well but hasn't been able to summon up her devastating kick over the last 300 meters, mainly because she's been going out in 2:25 or 2:26 in races with some very fast milers.

Yesterday, she went out in a more relaxed 2:33 and was able to cover the final lap in a brisk 71.7.

"She's been going out fast because she's been racing against the Trotters (of Red Bank) and Casey Nelson (of Hunterdon Central) and she didn't have her kick off that pace," Cherokee coach Chris Tarello said. "Today, she went out slower and you could see how much she had left on the last lap. She was really strong at the end."

This was a two-person race over the

final 1½ laps, and with 300 to go, Burkholder separated from Angela Bizzarri of Mason, Ohio, and won by 20 meters.

"I could hear her behind me — I knew she was close," Burkholder said. "I sensed her on the turn and heard her footsteps and then somewhere on the backstretch I didn't hear her anymore. I just told myself, 'This is your last race this year, just make it worth it.' It was my last chance and I knew I just had to hang on until the end."

Burkholder anchored the Cherokee girls distance medley team to second place in the unseeded section of the

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