

Local teams carve niche in history

Woodrow Wilson finishes 7th in 4x100; Willingboro wins S. Jersey 4x400 relay

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PHILADELPHIA — South Jersey high school track programs have run faster times at the Penn Relays and may run faster in the future.

But the 97th Annual Penn Relay Carnival run before a sun-drenched meet-record crowd of 41,612 fans at Franklin Field yesterday carved itself a place in history as the most successful for the many local teams.

Four South Jersey schools — Woodrow Wilson, Willingboro, Highland and Shawnee — all qualified for Championship of America races in their respective events, the first time four local schools have done so in the same year.

Edgewood's 4x100-meter relay placed sixth in the small-school consolation race to the Championship of America.

There was even a meet record set by a South Jersey school. Rancocas Valley won the inaugural Delaware Valley 4x400 "B" race in 3 minutes, 35.10 seconds.

Wilson placed seventh in the 4x100 with a time of 42.55 with a foursome of Omar Cassidy, Darian English, Rohan Etoria and anchor Ron Johnson. Calabar of Jamaica won the final in 40.84, the seventh straight win in the event by a Jamaican school.

Wilson edged St. Jago of Jamaica for seventh place by one-one-hundredth of a second.

Coach Dave Cade's team was making its second appearance in a Championship of America race after qualifying for the 4x100 in 1984.

"This is a real big race under our belts despite our finish, and it really tells us what we can do," said Wilson's leadoff man Omar Cassidy, one of three underclassmen on the relay.

Etoria is the only senior, while Johnson is a junior and English a sophomore.

"Our time was good in the finals, but the thing we have to do

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We'll be back next year."

Willingboro finished fifth in the 4x400 with a time of 3:19.70.

The Chimeras qualified for the finals with a winning 3:18.17 in the South Jersey Suburban race behind Lamont Smith's blazing 46.1 anchor split, the fastest time of nearly 1,500 high school runners in the event.

Willingboro placed second in the Championship of America 4x100 in 1982, and won the 4x800 and distance medley in 1983, but had never qualified for the finals in the 4x400 before yesterday.

Henderson (Pa.) won the 4x400 final in 3:13.38 in a photo finish with Kingston College of Jamaica, which ran the same time. The American victory broke a string of six consecutive wins by Jamaican teams.

"I don't know exactly what went wrong but we really didn't run our race," said Smith, who was joined in the finals by Rob Douglas, Carlos Worthy and Gene Barnes.

"I felt we were capable of doing a 3:14 or 3:15 but at least we were the first Willingboro 4x400 to make the finals."

Shawnee and Highland both ran superb times in yesterday morning's 4x800 trials to qualify for the afternoon's 10-team final.

Shawnee, making its first appearance in a Championship of America race, ran a 7:53.44 in the trials, the eighth-fastest time in South Jersey history.

Highland, which qualified for the distance medley final in 1981, was close behind with a 7:53.99, the ninth-fastest time ever run in South Jersey.

In the finals, however, Highland placed sixth in 7:59.47 and Shawnee finished eighth in 8:10.50. Vere Tech of Jamaica won the race in 7:38.89 and St. Jago of Jamaica was second in 7:39.40.

"At the beginning of the season, one of our goals was to run against

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who combined with Rondell Braston, Chris Simon and Jason Tobey.

"I felt like I was on top the world this morning when we made it into the finals.

"I really didn't expect us to run as good a time in the finals, though, because you just can't run a hard race like that in the trials and come back the same day and do better."

Shawnee anchor Chris Tarello is already making plans to be in the same race next year. Tarello and teammate Keith O'Brien are juniors, while Aaron Totten-Lancaster is a sophomore. Leadoff man Rick VanEmburch is the only senior.

"We were talking before the finals started that no matter how bad we did in the race, no other Shawnee team had even made it this far," said Tarello.

"This will definitely season us for next year, and next year I'm sure we can do even better."

Edgewood's 4x100 foursome of Shawn Summers, Mike London, Curtis Wright and anchor Lee DeRamus ran a 44.00 in the consolation race after qualifying with a 43.91 in Friday's trials. St. James of Chester, Pa. won the consolation in 42.84.

"We were hoping to get into a faster heat on Friday so we could get a faster qualifying time and make the final, but things worked out OK," said DeRamus.

The same four Edgewood runners also placed second to Willingboro in the S.J. 4x400 with a time of 3:24.35.

Woodrow Wilson finished third in 3:25.01 and Overbrook was fourth in 3:26.41. Defending champion Camden Catholic placed fifth in 3:27.16 and Vineland was sixth in 3:31.57.

Rancocas Valley's foursome in the first Delaware Valley "B" 4x400 included Eric Smith, Paul