

Seconds, thirds propel Shawnee

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WEST DEPTFORD

Sometimes a whole bunch of seconds and thirds are better than a couple of firsts.

The Shawnee High School girls track team was proof of that yesterday at the West Deptford Relays, where the Renegades captured their fourth team championship in the past seven years despite winning just one event.

Shawnee used five second-place finishes and a pair of thirds to rack up 80 team points and take top honors in the Group 4 competition. Winslow Township, which captured first in six events, finished second with 68.

"We knew we would be competitive today," coach Fran Siedlecki said. "The key was how we used the different girls. We were without a couple runners, who were taking tests for college, so we had to mix and match some, but we feel that the big thing is to be careful not to use up all your talent in the beginning of the day."

The Renegades did win the inaugural 6,400-meter relay race behind strong performances from its deep distance group, which featured juniors Kim Bonner, Lisa Manaresi and Katie Quinn and sophomore Liz Newman.

"That was a good event for us," Bonner said. "Being as we have a lot of distance girls who like the mile, I think that was definitely a race we were looking forward to."

Bonner and the rest of the distance runners provided Siedlecki's team with some valuable points in the 3,200 relay and the distance medley relay races as well, as they ran to second-place finishes to help offset Winslow's wins in the 800, 1600, sprint medley, shuttle hurdles, intermediate hurdles and high jump.

"Last week (Hall of Fame Relays) was good for us to get off to a good start, but this is a really big weekend because most of the big teams in South Jersey were here," Siedlecki said. "We

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Cherokee proved that Wednesday's big win over Eastern was no fluke with a victory in the 3,200 relay, as junior Emily Keller, sophomore Megan O'Leary and seniors Malia Lyles and Jenna Viggiano finished in 10:06.2.

"I think beating Eastern last week showed people what we felt all along," Viggiano said. "We always seem to be the underdogs, but that's a role that we like. Right now, our confidence is high and we're eager to show people that this is just the start."

The Chiefs (fifth place) took second in the 6,400 relay and third in the 400 and 1600.

"Right now, we just want to keep it going," O'Leary said. "We showed a lot of people that we are for real."

"But the season is still young and we're looking forward to getting even better."

Rancocas Valley's third-place finish put the finishing touches on a Burlington County sweep in the 3,200. The Red Devils took third in the shot put relay.

In Group 2, Cinnaminson continued its winning ways with a gold medal in the sprint medley. Seniors Kristi McConnell and Laura Niedermayer gave third leg Kristen Tricocci plenty of room to work with before handing the baton over to freshman Jenny Matteson for the final 800.

Matteson never relinquished the lead, but did turn it on over the last 150 meters to hold off a tough effort by Bishop Eustace's Meghan Baker.

"When she caught up to me on the final lap, I just said to myself that there was no way I was going to let her beat me," Matteson said. "With those three running ahead of me, it seems like I almost always have the lead or have a good chance with 800 to go."

"We had a good week last week and we just beat a really good Burlington Township team the other day, so it was important for us to come down here and have another good day."

The Pirates, who finished third in the team scoring with 43