

Cross Country-

by Andrew McCabe

The Ridge High School boys just concluded one of the most successful cross country seasons in program history. Starting in the early summer, the boys put in countless hours of work and miles to prepare for the season ahead. The results of their summer dedication showed quickly when the boys ran at their first meet; The Battle at Ocean County Park. In this race Jackson Barna, James Kisker, Andrew McCabe, Hudson Yu and Anothony Clerici took away a convincing win in the senior race. The 5 man average came out to be 15:58 with Andrew McCabe and James Kisker both breaking 16 minutes and Jackson Barna demolishing the coveted Ocean County Park course record in 14:41.

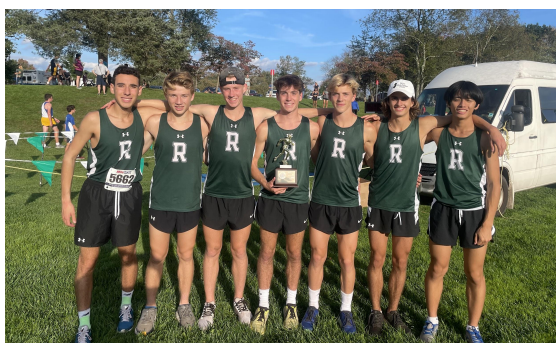
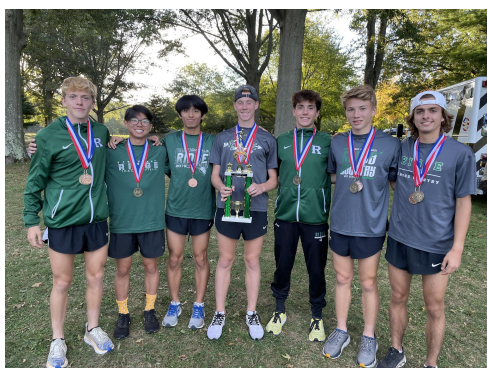
Next up at the enormously popular Shore Coaches Invitational the varsity top 7 was assembled together for the first time. In a race that the boys put very little emphasis on they came out with a win in the varsity B race. Even with top runner Jackson Barna not finishing due to an ankle issue, the boys still averaged 16:58 in their win over North Hunterdon. In the JV race the ridge boys went 1-4 with Gavin

Devine winning the race. The top 5 managed an 18:28 average for a decisive win.

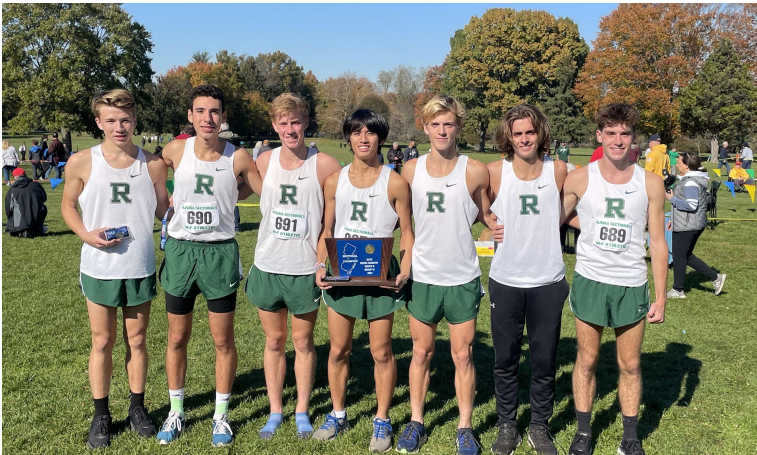
The Top 7 headed to the trails of van Cortlandt park in the Bronx for their next challenge in the Manhattan College Cross Country Invitational. Through the hilly gravel trails of the 4000m course the boys averaged 13:12 through 5 runners. The boys placed 6th overall in an extremely competitive Eastern states championship race, improving on their 10th place finish 2 years prior. Ridge finished as the top New Jersey team, and Jackson Barna was the overall champion in an unreal time of 12:04, which placed him among the company of some of the greatest highschool cross country runners of all time on the course record list.

After competing in one of the most prestigious competitions on the east coast, the ridge boys headed back to the trails of Pleasant Valley Park for the county championship. The top 7 ran the county race as a workout for the first 2 miles then raced the last 1.1 miles. Despite not running the entire race to their fullest abilities the boys managed to put together a perfect score. The first 5 runners from across the entire county to cross the finish line were all ridge runners. The team of Jackson Barna, Andrew McCabe, Patrick Doran, James Kisker and Hudson Yu averaged 16:37 to claim the win on their home course. In the JV

race ridge once again dominated claiming 8 of the top 10 spots and Michael Devine winning the race. The top 5 ridge boys combined for an almost perfect score of 17 points.



Heading into the championship season, the team faced stiff competition in the form of Westfield in the state section. Regardless, the ridge boys pulled off a convincing win, 40-59 over westfield, extending their section winning streak to 3 in a row. Standout performances from this race included those of Hudson Yu, Patrick Doran, Matthew Fukashima and Anthony Clerici.



After watching the varsity boys perform at Oak Ridge Park the JV crew followed suit and burned up the trails, dominating the Viking Last Chance Invitational. The team of Connor McMahon, Mitya Cole, Michael Devine, Jon Wey and Brenden McMahon averaged 17:00 for the 5k and solidified themselves as one of, if not the best JV team in the state. The winning Ridge team also consisted of no seniors, emphasizing ridge's depth and bright future.

The Varsity boys entered the Group 4 state championship as the favorite, but having never won a team group 4 state championship in program history, nothing was guaranteed. However the team did not disappoint, claiming the win over top competitors Westfield and Manapalan. This win marked a monumental moment in Ridge XCTF history as the first Group 4 state championship win as a team in any season.



The Meet of Champions marked the end of Cross country for the team. The Varsity boys Placed 4th overall at a meet featuring every team in the state, public and private. This 4th place finish ties for the highest finish of any Ridge team in school history and is the second consecutive meet of champions in which Ridge has medaled. The strong team performance was led by a second place overall finish by Jackson Barna. Barna ran an insane 15:13 to crush the Holmdel school record and place himself in the top 5 on the all time course record list.

