

Ray Lewis' Boys 2010s Distance XC Decade In Review

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Even a decade that wasn't about York, was still about York.

Before Mr. Joe Newton's retirement in 2016, the Dukes eeked out two state titles this decade, in 2010 and 2012. The storylines for both were fascinating-2010's version of the Dukes held onto the title by the skin of their teeth with Lake Zurich two points behind (162-164), and [Ron Hedman's](#) disqualification for a physical altercation with another runner catalyzed this drama. In 2012, which was Mr. Newton's final state title, York defeated O'Fallon handily. The Panthers were a powerful unknown quantity, running only against Missouri teams that year, and then scoring the first two team runners at state (Patrick Perrier and Alex Riba).

That would mark the 28th and most recent title for York. The Dukes won their fewest titles in a decade since the 1950s (before Newton's time), which opened the door wide open for the rest of the state. Sadly, Mr. Newton's passing in December 2017 gave finality to the transition into a new

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age of cross country in Illinois but also gave the entire state a chance to recognize the impact his legacy has had on the state as a whole and will continue to.

So then, after York, who had the decade?

A number of historic teams have enjoyed success, but staying power was limited for champions in this decade. In 3A, only Hinsdale Central repeated as champions, and even 2A powerhouse Mahomet-Seymour only managed two championships. All-time teams Sandburg, Neuqua Valley, Downers North, Wheaton South and St Charles all have won only once. The constantly shifting balance of power is a refreshing change for Illinois and has been best for the sport.

What questions are there for the next decade? How long will Josh Methner's record stand?

Methner's record is 13:49.86. For this to be properly contextualized, it needs to be compared with the historic state times aside from Craig Virgin's magical standard. Only Verzbicas and **Chris Derrick** (Neuqua Valley) came within six records of the record in the 46 years the record stood. In addition to these, **Tom Graves** (Sandburg, 1977), **Dave Walters** (Lincoln-Way, 1972) and Jon Davis (13:59.3), are the only runners to break 14:00 at the state meet (it should be noted that Dylan Jacobs ran 13:57.5 at the Peoria Invitational in 2017). In the vast expanse of the amazing talent, Illinois has seen for almost a half-century, that only six runners have ever broken 14:00 should accentuate the difficulty of the task. Furthermore, 13:49 represents a runner that is finishing about 65-70 meters ahead of a 14:00 runner.

This is just to formalize the reality that this record, obviously, should be considered just as unbreakable as we previously considered Virgin's to be-even all the more so. Numerous times did the state meet begin with narratives surrounding an attempt at the record: Can Derrick break the record? Can Verzbicas break the record? Can Davis? Can Kilrea/Jacobs? Etc.) and never once did it occur under these circumstances. Methner and Hersey coach Kevin Young were so tight-lipped about Methner's intention to chase the record that his performance was a surprise to everyone but them. But, maybe, those are the prerequisites for such a transformative performance as that. I have difficulty seeing the record fall during the 2020s.

However, if 2019 told 2010 that Verzbicas would fall short of the record, we may have said: "well if not him, then who?" So we are left only to guess who will hold the Detweiller record maybe ten years from now. Only two things are certain: his name won't be Craig Virgin, and if it's not Methner, it'll be dang hard.

Can Illinois Boys climb back to the top of the USA?

Neuqua Valley and York each won NTN (now NXN) titles in the 2000's. Yet, since 2010, an Illinois team has managed 4th three separate times, but never any higher. Western teams were dominant in this previous decade, so Illinois' team depth will need to slide up to break the western stranglehold.

What role will York play in this new era of Illinois Cross country?



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York shaped the competitive landscape of Illinois, so its role under the helm of Charlie Kern Sr. is worth inspection. York still had seven top-five finishes at state and qualified for NXN in 2019 after a six-year hiatus from the meet. So, it does not appear that the Dukes are leaving the scene anytime soon. Rather, the state should expect York to continue to reload from its strong feeder system and the cultural ties it has to cross country success-and this may very well mean state titles sooner, rather than later.