

HUNTERDON/WARREN/SUSSEX ~ GIRLS CROSS-COUNTRY, FALL, 2011

Sparta's DiSomma blazes course record, top-ranked Voorhees wins again at Hunterdon/Warren/Sussex meet

RICH BEVENSEE, October 12, 2011 11:08 p.m.

In a sense, Sparta's Claudia DiSomma is enjoying a case of déjà vu this fall.

In DiSomma's freshman season of track in 2010, she caught herself and the rest of the state off-guard with her amazing success, which included an NJSIAA Meet of Champions crown, and the payoff was her selection as First Team All-State.

Now a junior, DiSomma made the tough choice to give up soccer for cross-country, and once again she is stunning both herself and the running community.

DiSomma out-sprinted Voorhees front-runner Nisa Cicitta over the final 150 meters and captured the individual title by two seconds in a blazing 17:34.0 at the third Hunterdon/Warren/Sussex Championships yesterday at the Sussex County Fairgrounds in Augusta.

DiSomma broke the three-mile course record of 17:53 which was set two years ago by Voorhees All-Stater Colette Whitney.

"Yes, it's surprising how well my season is going," DiSomma said. "It's kind of like the same thing that happened my freshman year. Everything is brand new. I had no idea of what to anticipate and everything has turned out so well. I have surprised myself and I've impressed myself. It's just a nice experience to see how well I can do in something new.

"I love soccer – it's been my life – but I knew I had to come out to do cross-country," DiSomma added. "I know track is my future and I want to compete in college. If I want to go places this is the year college coaches look at. There are some days I really, really want to go back to it (soccer), but I know I made the right decision."

For an indication of how fast the field was -- as well as how flat the fairgrounds course was -- the top three girls broke 18 minutes and the top 14 girls broke 19 minutes.

Cicitta, a junior at Voorhees, placed second in 17:35.7 and High Point junior Sarah Disanza finished third in 17:46.9.

Once again, Cicitta paced the effort for Voorhees, the top-ranked team in The Star-Ledger Top 20. With five runners charging into the top 14, Voorhees averaged 18:26.0 and claimed its third straight H-W-S title with 42 points, while No. 8 Hunterdon Central claimed second place with 72 points and No. 15 North Hunterdon took third with 130.

That makes 11 straight titles for Voorhees, which strung together eight consecutive Hunterdon-Warren titles before Sussex County teams joined the fray in 2009.

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For Voorhees, Cicitta was followed by sophomore Clarissa Modde (fifth, 18:14.9), and juniors Shannon Carney (10th, 18:41.1), Kristen Erickson (11th, 18:41.9) and Brigid McGill (14th, 18:56.2). Voorhees' window of time between its first and fifth runners was a season-best 1:21.

"We're still looking to get that (margin between first and fifth) down to under a minute," said Voorhees coach Justina Cassavell, whose team is averaging a window of 1:27 this season. "With (No. 2) Mount St. Dominic out there, all a team has to do is put it together on any given day. We have to close that gap."

Voorhees' next opportunity to tighten that gap will be at the Skyland Conference Championships, on Oct. 27 at Natirar Park in Peapack.

Hunterdon Central was led by sophomore Kaitlyn Bedard, who placed seventh overall in 18:26.4. Third-place North Hunterdon was paced by freshman Eve Glasergreen, 14th in 18:36.8.

Speed was the theme of the day and DiSomma was the flag-bearer, flashing her track talent yesterday in overtaking Cicitta. DiSomma, who owns a 4:45 in the mile and a 2:09 800, trailed Cicitta by 10 yards with only 150 meters left before overtaking the Voorhees star on the gravel finish.

With her victory, DiSomma will be considered a favorite for the state Group 3 title next month at Holmdel Park. It was the first time DiSomma defeated Cicitta after losing to her at the season-opening Randolph Invitational. DiSomma has now beaten Disanza for the second straight time after opening the season with two losses to the High Point star.

"Coming here I knew their strengths and I knew their weaknesses," DiSomma said. "I knew if I stuck close by them I could out-sprint them at the end."

GIRLS

TEAMS: 1-Voorhees 42. 2-Hunterdon Central 72. 3-North Hunterdon 100. 4-Pope John 130. 5-High Point 144. 6-North Warren 182. 7-Phillipsburg 210. 8-Sparta 252. 9-Lenape Valley 261. 10-Kittatinny 296. 11-Vernon 326. 12-Sussex Tech 331. 13-Delaware Valley 359. 14-Warren Hills 365. 15-Belvidere 378. 16-Newton 413. 17-Hopatcong 452. 18-South Hunterdon 456.

INDIVIDUALS: 1-Claudia DiSomma, Sparta, 17:34.0. 2-Nisa Cicitta, Voorhees, 17:35.7. 3-Sarah Disanza, High Point, 17:46.9. 4-Meghan Carroll, Phillipsburg, 18:12.8. 5-Clarissa Modde, Voorhees, 18:14.9. 6-Tess Keller, Pope John, 18:19.0. 7-Kaitlyn Bedard, Hunterdon Central, 18:26.4. 8-Allison McCurry, Sussex Tech, 18:30.5. 9-Eve Glasergreen, North Hunterdon, 18:36.8. 10-Shannon Carney, Voorhees, 18:41.1.