

Neil Howard is the National Decathlon Champion

Guilderland Girls Capture Relay

The trip to Oregon was well worth it for Neil Howard. The Taconic Hills junior smashed a 57-year-old state record Friday night (June 16), rallying to win the decathlon in the 2023 Nike Outdoor Nationals at historic Hayward Field.

Howard finished with 7,153 points to take down the state mark of 6,779 set by Alvin Pearman of Roosevelt (Long Island) in 1966. He won by 118 points over Max Tucker of Georgia. Howard now owns the state freshman (6,316), sophomore (6,683) and junior class records.

Howard stood fifth after Day 1 but took the lead with a PR-matching 15-9 in the pole vault. He slipped to second after the javelin (155-9), but his 4:30.23 in the 1,500 was sufficient to prevail. Howard's other marks were 11.30 in the 100, 21-10 3/4 in the long jump, 41-4 1/4 in the shot put, 5-5 in the high jump, 48.49 in the 400, 14.97 in the 110 high hurdles and 119-7 in the discus.

Meanwhile, across the country in Philadelphia, the Guilderland Track Club won the girls' 1,600-meter sprint medley relay Saturday, Saratoga Springs finished an impressive second in the distance medley relay Sunday and the Streaks' Sheridan Wheeler placed second in the 2,000-meter steeplechase Friday night during the New Balance Outdoor Nationals at Franklin Field.

Newly crowned All-Americans Megan Swan, Saida Assabahi, Kendall Barnhart and Addison Vellekoop led the Guilderland effort, resulting in a meet record time of 3:57.66. Vellekoop's 800 split was 2:10.30 and helped the Lady Dutch prevail by nearly two seconds. They previously ran 3:55.95 in the Loucks Games. A post-race interview can be seen here: https://runnerspace.com/gprofile.php?mgroup_id=17019&do=videos&video_id=361854

The same Guilderland foursome came back Sunday to finish 11th in the 4 x 400 relay with a time of 3:51.87. Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake ran a 3:55.51.

The Saratoga girls' distance medley team, competing as Kinetic Running Club, ran the second-fastest time in Section 2 history, an 11:37.67. Sheridan Wheeler, McKinley Wheeler, Alycia Hart and Emily Bush led for much of the race before being overtaken by Stella Kemes' 4:48.28 anchor leg for the Carolina Cavaliers, who were timed in meet-record 11:33.18. Saratoga set the all-time Section 2 record of 11:36.81 in 2008.

Earlier, Wheeler's steeplechase time of 6:20.80 bettered her own all-time Section 2 record set this season. Mia Paolino of Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake placed 11th. Because of storm delays, the race did not start until after midnight.

Emily Bush of Saratoga Springs was fifth in the 5,000 Thursday night. Her time of 17:06.49 ranks fifth on the Section 2 record list. Kaleigh Higgins of Shaker placed eighth in 17:15.27. Saratoga also got an 11th in the pentathlon from Genevieve Duchaussee with 3,209 points.

Bashir Praileau of Albany Academy posted a 14.78 in the first round of the 110-meter high hurdles Saturday, but did not advance. Similarly, Guilderland freshman Parker Steele was eliminated in the 100-meter flights, despite running a 14.92. Praileau had one legal attempt in the long jump, a 22-6 ¼, and did not advance. Maddie Powers of Queensbury logged a 4:58.73 in the girls' mile.

In the freshman girls division, Ava Weiss of Columbia finished third in the 400-meter hurdles with a time of 64.05. She also ran a 15.77 in the 100-meter highs but missed the final eight by just two positions.