

Tenaflly's Hong goes back-to-back to become a two-time boys diving state champion

- Updated: Feb. 28, 2024, 10:30 p.m.]
- Published: Feb. 28, 2024, 9:50 p.m.



Derek Hong of Tenaflly competes in the NJSIAA Boys Diving Championships at Montgomery High School in Skillman, NJ on Wednesday, February 28, 2024. Duncan Williams | For NJ Advance Media
Subscribers can gift articles to anyone

By

- [Steven Bassin | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com](#)

Tenaflly junior Derek Hong walked into the NJSIAA boys diving championships on Wednesday at Montgomery High School in Skillman grateful for having the opportunity to defend his title.

Hong walked out of the state meet displaying that same feeling of gratefulness as he held his second state championship in his arms ever so tightly.

The junior defended his state championship successfully by scoring 522.25 points in a terrific performance to win the state meet for the second straight year.

“It feels amazing (winning two straight state championships),” Hong said. “I wanted to win again but coming in wasn’t expecting it. I feel like all the hard work I’ve put in showed and I’m very glad with the result. I’m just so grateful for everything.”

Hong fended off Mahwah’s Christian Merturi to win his straight state championship. Merturi scored 508.20 points during the state meet to earn his first top-two finish.

Consistency throughout the state meet was the key to Hong repeating as champion. The junior scored 21 points or more in every one of his 11 dives and posted a score of 25.50 during his Reverse Dive Pike.

“Learning how to ride the board really helped me,” Hong said. “Once I figured it out, everything clicked.”

On the girls’ side of the state meet, Hunterdon Central’s Katerina Hoffman ended her career for the Red Devils by capturing her third straight state championship.

With a shot at ending his high school career as a three-time state champion, Hong said having the chance to achieve that is “amazing”, but adds that his main mission next season will be to continue to work hard at his craft and see where it leads him.

As for the present, celebrating his achievement with all the people who have supported him throughout his journey is what Hong is looking forward to doing.

“I’m just so grateful for all of the support my coaches and family have given me,” Hong said. “I’m excited to hug my parents and I can’t wait to tell my friends.”

Coming in third place at the state meet was Clearview’s Jake Rosenberger with 455.40 points. After getting fifth place the past two years at the state meet, Rosenberger said it “feels good” to place in the top three and hopes to build on it next year.

“I want to go up from here,” Rosenberger said. “Next year, I want to get one or two. Just have to keep working.”

Paramus’ Nicholas Colombrita came in fourth place and Cole LaBarre of Ocean City rounded out the top five with a fifth-place finish. Montgomery’s Justin Miller edged out Owen Boulton of Pitman for sixth place and Marc Dimeo placed eighth for Washington Township.

1-Derek Hong (Tenafly) 522.25; 2-Christian Merturi (Mahwah) 508.20; 3-Jake Rosenberge (Clearview) 455.40; 4-Nicholas Colombrita (Paramus) 386.05; 5-Cole LaBarre (Ocean City) 365.05; 6-Justin Miller (Montgomery) 348.80; 7-Owen Boulton (Pitman) 344.00; 8-Marc Dimeo (Washington Township) 342.45; 9-Niko Dounoulis (Ocean City) 330.75; 10-Brian Lowry (GCIT) 301.40; 11-Joseph Noell (Ocean City) 268.50.

Steven Bassin can be reached at SBassin@njadvancemedia.com.