



Drew Griffith outruns competition at Cross Country Nationals



Drew Griffith ran across the finish line, in first place, at Cross Country Nationals.

By Emily Tallis

Senior Drew Griffith made his second appearance at the Foot Locker Cross Country Nationals on December 9, 2023. Improving on last year's eighth place finish, Griffith was able to push his way to first place, this year.

Griffith said, "I just really wanted to go out there and prove that I was one of the best and coming off of regionals, I got second place. I wanted some redemption from that too."

For most of the race Griffith was in fifth place until the final hill, where he was able to push his way to the top spot and keep his pace so that he could stay there, also while trying to stay relaxed. If Griffith was in sight of the leader he knew he still had a shot.

Coach Richard Davanzati said, "Anytime we have a bigger race, we normally sit down and talk over how we want to run the race. In the four years he's been running cross country for me, I found that he is a very fast learner and I always ask for his opinion before I give mine. After he was done running his workout, on the Thursday before Nationals, I told him 'You know you don't have

to lead' because we want some of the other kids to do the work. He said he had planned on the second time up the major hill, he would make a move at that point and go after the leader because of the strength he has. On the screen at the start, you could see that he was doing exactly what we had talked about."

Griffith's strategy of staying towards the front but not in the very front, helped him when he got to the point of the final hill to get the momentum and motivation he needed to get to that first place spot. The runner who was in the lead, Ty Steorts (West Virginia), was overtaken by four people, one of those being Griffith. On the downhill of the race Griffith and Berkley Nance (Virginia) seemed to be almost neck and neck. Griffith was able to catch some wind and separate the two of them, keeping him in first. With about 500 meters left in the race, Ryan Pajak (Ringgold High School, Pennsylvania) was trying to catch up to Griffith but was unsuccessful, making Pajak finish in second place, and Griffith finishing in first. Griffith ran a 15:06.9 time during the race.

Griffith said, "I was trying to stay relaxed. I knew if I was in sight of the leader, I still had a shot. By the time the second hill rolled around I knew I was ready to make a move and after that I took off, and I don't regret it."

Griffith's days of running cross country don't end at Butler. Griffith will be running at Notre Dame come fall 2024, running once again with Butler alum, CJ Singleton. Singleton was able to watch the race with some of his teammates at Notre Dame, cheering Griffith on as they watched.

Singleton said, "It was so cool to watch him race. He raced so well. I don't know if he could've raced better. I think he was in a great spot the whole time. When I saw him start to make that move to move into first on that hill, I knew he had it. I knew that was the move to make and I knew he was going to finish it. My initial reaction [to Drew committing to Notre Dame] was a sigh of relief, it was six months of trying to get him to commit. It was so much pressure to be his friend but also try to recruit him. Initially, it was a sigh of relief for him to finally commit

but I was so excited. I really wanted to run with him for another two years, just to finish my career off with him. We've both gotten to where we are because of each other. It was really special."

Not only did a friendship and the Notre Dame cross country team help Griffith decide that Notre Dame was the right fit for him, it was the community that surrounded him, his family that was there at the biggest meet of the year, to support him. Not only did they support at Nationals, but they have supported him his whole life.

**"I just really wanted to go out there and prove that I was one of the best and coming off of regionals, I got second place. I wanted some redemption from that too."
-Drew Griffith, Senior**

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Butler alumni go on to careers in communications

By Emily Tallis

Journalism has changed over the years through technology, but the people who are working in it every day still have the same passion they've always had for it. Butler has had many alumni go into the communications field, whether that be professional journalism, broadcasting, radio production, news media, or media relations.

Glenn Graham graduated in 1984, from Butler, and is a high school sports writer for The Baltimore Sun. He started writing for The Rocket at Slippery Rock University. He started at The Baltimore Sun as an editorial assistant, soon after graduating from Slippery Rock University. Within eight months a staff writer position opened and he has been a staff writer since then. Graham mainly writes about high school sports, including athlete highlights.

Graham said, "[Being in journalism as a career] has to be a true passion because there's not a whole lot of money to be made in the profession so you really have to love what you do. For me, it's the people and the change, that's why I've always stayed with high school sports. The young people I get to write about really appreciate it. It's really fun to get to know a whole bunch of different people doing a whole bunch of different things, young people. When I write about professional sports they could care less, but when I write about a high school kid, their parents, coach, they all are so grateful and appreciative, and that's really rewarding for me."

Tyler Friel graduated in 2012 and is currently the News Director for the Butler Radio Network. In high school, Friel was interested in both writing and broadcasting. He started volunteering to do public address work, being over the loudspeakers at sporting events, like lacrosse, soccer, and volleyball. He then went on to BC3 and Slippery Rock University, and was then hired at the Butler Radio to do weekend news, in 2013.

Friel said, "I think technology has forced journalism to change how it's done. As social media had become a bigger thing, right around when I graduated, I think that forced journalism to adopt a faster approach to things, in terms of having the immediacy of knowing what's happening at the moment."

Austin Uram graduated in 2012 and is a staff writer for The Cranberry Butler Eagle. Uram covers Lancaster, Jackson Township, Cranberry Township, Adams Township, Forward Township, Evans City Borough, Harmony Borough, and Zelienople Borough municipal meetings, and council meetings.

Uram said, "I started writing in 2017 as a freelance writer for The Butler Eagle, I primarily did feature work. I left the country for about five years and when I came back in 2022, as a freelance writer for The Butler Eagle."

Brendan Howe graduated in 2017 and is currently a sports writer for The Butler Eagle. Howe started writing for the Skyliner when he was a junior. When Howe was deciding on his major at Slippery Rock University, he was between being an English teacher and going into journalism.

Brendan said, "I took [journalism] with [Mr. Erik Robbins] for two years, my brother was in it my second year, which was really fun. There weren't a lot of kids in that class, there were maybe six or seven, but we took it really seriously."

Tyler Howe graduated in 2019 and just recently finished up his Media Relations Internship for the Pittsburgh Pirates, and is currently working at a church in Wexford doing their communications, which is the first time that he is not working directly with sports in a long time.

Tyler said, "[While writing for The Rocket], I was able to go to New York City and cover the Big East Basketball Tournament in 2022. I got to cover games in Madison Square Garden for three or four days and I was able to be a part of the press conferences."

Natalie Marburger graduated in 2020 and is currently studying News Media at the University of Alabama. Marburger is also a Page Editor for The Crimson White at Alabama. When Natalie wrote for the Skyliner she was an editor and wrote about sports.

Marburger said, "[College journalism] is a lot of in-depth writing. You are getting into more hard-hitting topics like homecoming and political debates, things you don't have to write about in high school. I love the people you get to meet and all the friends you make, you get to talk to so many people about their life and what happens. I also like the investigative part of it, finding out what's hap-

pening."

The journalism class, which produces the Butler Skyliner, typically includes a small number of students

who enjoy writing and designing a newspaper. Any student interested in the class can reach out to Mr. Robbins in Room 113.

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Senior High English teacher shoots his shot with USA Basketball

By Emily Tallis

Mr. Joe Lewandowski is not only an English teacher at the Senior High, but he is also the coach for the USA 3x3 men's basketball team.

He started his basketball career when he was in sixth grade and played throughout high school.

Mr. Lewandowski said, "I went to college to play football. I was a Division I football player, but really missed basketball and so I left and ended up playing basketball at Slippery Rock University for the rest of college. I went overseas to play. I left college early to play overseas, and played pro ball."

Once Lewandowski became a student teacher, he had an opportunity to coach here at Butler. He asked Pennsylvania Basketball Hall of Fame recipient and retired economics teacher at Butler, George Abraham, if he could help coach. Besides Butler, Lewandowski coached in Europe and, currently, at Butler Community College and USA Basketball. Lewandowski



Mr. Joe Lewandowski (left), an English teacher at the Senior High, has worked with USA Basketball for over a decade. Photo courtesy of USA Basketball.

has been coaching USA Basketball for 11 years.

Mr. Lewandowski said, "I worked for a guy named John Lucas; he was tied in with Nike, and we were bringing the best players in the country. I'd fly around and work with him. We would do pre-draft things; John was an NBA coach, and getting to work with the best players in the country, future NBA players, USA Basketball recruits those guys and they

saw me coaching there and offered me an opportunity."

Mr. Lewandowski is not only a teacher and a coach, but he is also a dad. He has three daughters: Kylee, a University of Richmond senior; Dacia, a University of Akron freshman; and Raina, a freshman at Butler Senior High. Both Kylee and Dacia play basketball at their colleges.

Mr. Lewandowski said, "I think (coaching) allows you to have a lot of differ-

ent relationships, which is pretty cool, across a lot of different spectrums and it's great because you get a chance to travel across the entire world, constantly. You get a chance to coach the best players in the world, but it's also a chance to make connections with people who are passionate about playing basketball like you are. From a family standpoint, it's also a challenge because you are away from home at times and

so your relationships have to stay strong within your family as well and they sacrifice a lot for you to have this opportunity to do a lot of things, but it is still very worthwhile. Anytime you get a chance to help people reach their dreams, it's a great honor and a blessing."

Dacia has been playing basketball for most of her life, and she now plays for the Akron women's basketball team. Seeing her dad coach for the USA basketball team has been a great experience for her, being a part of that program through her dad. Mr. Lewandowski brings back a lot of lessons that he learns on his trips and teaches them to his kids.

Dacia said, "I look up to him as a role model - he has a competitive drive. He's always working to find ways to get better and learn new things with anything, basketball, non-basketball. He's always striving to learn anything he can and that's a big thing I've learned from him."

Girls' wrestling team debuts

By Emily Tallis

For the first time, Butler now has a girls' varsity wrestling team. The boys' team has had females on the team in the past, but there were never enough girls interested in the sport until now. As of now, the only coach is Nathan Bottiger, who was, in previous years, a junior high boys' coach.

On October 25, the team had a "Try It" Night for those who might be interested in joining the team. Some girls who have wrestling experience were there to help the newer girls out.

Bottiger said, "Our team, now that it is PIAA official, is just like the boys' team. We have our own set of points. Every team that is PIAA-sanctioned has a set of points, and they spend those points to determine their competition. For wrestling, if we go to a match where it is our team versus another team, that's one point, and when we go to a tournament, that's three points."

Before, when the girls and boys were on the same team, if there was a girls-only tournament, it cost the team those three points, just to send the girls to that tournament. Now

both teams have their own set of points.

Within the eight years that Bottiger has been coaching junior high wrestling, the number of girls has tripled, which is one of the main reasons that the team has become what it is.

Senior Ana Malovich said, "I'm looking forward to helping all these girls try this sport and hopefully winning a state title this year just because it's my last year on the team. The support and coaches that surround me, know what they need to do for me and help push me to the best potential of myself."

Malovich has been wrestling for 13 years, two of those at the junior high level, and four at the high school level. She plans to attend Grand Valley State University in the fall, and join the wrestling team there.

The process of creating the girls' team at Butler was about a two-year process, athletic director Mr. Bill Mylan and superintendent Dr. Brian White, had been talking about it for the past couple of years, and when the PIAA announced it as an official sport in the 2022-2023 wrestling season, they made it official.

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JAM spreads kindness

By Katie Portillo Rodas

JAM/#Be the Kind Kid Club is a student activity that prides itself on making creative projects for elementary students, all while having fun. Special education teacher Mrs. Susan Kovac is the club adviser who has shown support and care for the students who are interested in this organization.

According to Kovac, the program was started by two kids and a teacher in a school in Pittsburgh. It all started with students making things and selling them for profit. Kovac found this and was immediately interested in how it could impact our school. After Kovac contacted the school and learned more information, Butler's administrators accepted the club and welcomed it into the district.

"We liked that message of being the kind kid," Kovac stated. "We find out what

skills we're good at."

Working at things like following directions is one of the overall objectives of JAM. Essentially, it plays a benefit for students with special needs, though it can apply to anyone.

Sophomore Cadence Rettig, a member of JAM, said, "I wish to positively impact them just by being kind and sharing it. Everybody is different, but they should all be treated the same with kindness and respect."

Things like communication and self-advocacy also play a huge role. "We tie in all of those skills," Kovac explained. "Basically it is a club where we make things and sell them, and give the money to charity, while tying in everything we have in our curriculum."

For more information, visit bethekindkid.net or see Mrs. Kovac in Room 207.

Video Club visits Perspectrum



Freshman Ryan Maire, a member of the Video Club, helped set up a camera shot with 2013 Butler graduate Ryan McIntyre, who is the owner of Perspectrum, a video production company based in Harmony.



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