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SPORTS

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Parros blazes to incredible glory Trackster sets state 400 record, wins gold at Pan Am

By Mark Sanchez
Correspondent

Clayton Parros, the star runner for Seton Hall Prep bound for the University of North Carolina, recently had a chance to compete for his country in Trinidad in the 2009 Pan American Junior Athletics Championship. The 18-year-old Bloomfield resident, as is his tendency, came away with a gold on the 4x400-meter team. Although he competed against some of the world's top competition and won, Parros still was not completely satisfied.

"I led off and split 46 flat. I feel maybe I could have run faster, but I warmed up too early, but it was a solid leadoff leg," said the recent SHP graduate. "It was a lot of fun getting to run there."

A gold medal in international competition isn't too bad for someone who only started competing four years ago.

It started innocently enough for Parros. In his freshman year, SHP track coach Mike Mielko saw Parros running in gym class. "He said I should go out for the team," recalled Parros.

Little did Parros or his coach know that this would mark the beginning of one of the single greatest track runners in New Jersey history.

Parros immediately was promoted to varsity, where he could run with the likes of Patrick Blackie, one of the top runners in the state. Blackie proved an instrumental aid to Parros' career.

"You have someone older than you who's got experience and you can watch and see how they prepare and shape what you do off of what they do. It was good. I'm glad I got to train with him and under him."

Learning from Blackie, from coach Mielko, and from coach Steve Trembley, Parros continued to improve and established himself as one of the top runners in the state. He trained day in and day out, even giving up his first love, basketball,

'One of my goals would be to run in the Olympics, 2012 is coming up, who knows how fast I'll progress, what times I'll be running. But I definitely want to make the trials, and making the team is a goal of mine.'

— Clayton Parros

to fully concentrate on running. All this effort paid off handsomely with his senior season of track.

Going into the season, "I wanted to get the state record," said Parros, referring to the 400-meter event. "That was probably my biggest goal. Over the past year, I developed a friendship with former Olympian Larry James, and we had gotten together and spoken and analyzed my season and my goals and decided how I could accomplish them. When we had done that, getting the record was the top priority on the athletic season."

As with any state record, it would not be broken easily. Winter season passed with a host of gold medals, but no times better than 46.02 in the 400 meters, the mark set by Olympian Dennis Mitchell in 1984.

Spring season expired, culminating with Parros leading his SHP team to second place in the state. He earned an astounding four gold medals, winning in the 100, 200, 400, and 4x400, but still did not have the record that he so craved.

Parros then won the 200 and 400 at the NJSIAA Meet of Champions.

While most would then shut down their bodies to rest for the summer, Parros' real season began. His training continued and intensified to prepare him for invitational meets, including the Great Southwest Invitational in Albuquerque, N. M. Surrounded by elite competition, Parros ran a blistering 45.71, establishing himself as the single greatest 400-meter runner in state history.

"It felt good," said Parros. "It didn't really hit me until I got back and looked at the top 10 list for the 400

in New Jersey. I was like, 'Wow, I'm the best out of these guys.'"

With the record in his back pocket, Parros then awaited his biggest race to date, the aforementioned Pan American Junior Athletics Championship in Trinidad.

Parros' leadoff effort set the tone for the race. He handed off the baton in first, and the subsequent legs of the race only extended his lead, winning the race in an astounding 3:03.24. The U.S. team came back with gold, and Parros came back with a wealth of knowledge and experience that will surely help his future.

"It was a really good experience getting to do that and see how a professional meet is run," he said. "That should help me in future competitions."

These future competitions figure to be pretty significant, as Parros has big plans.

"One of my goals would be to run in the Olympics," he said. "2012 is coming up, who knows how fast I'll progress, what times I'll be running. But I definitely want to make the trials, and making the team is a goal of mine."

These lofty goals are only attainable if Parros is healthy and rested. Accordingly, after running a full year without any significant break, Parros is now enjoying his time off. At least until he gets to UNC.

"I'm shutting it down now until I get down to school," he said. "When I get down there, I'll probably start it up again. But I was definitely blessed throughout the season. I'm so thankful to God about that."

And New Jersey is thankful for getting to witness the greatest 400 runner in state history.

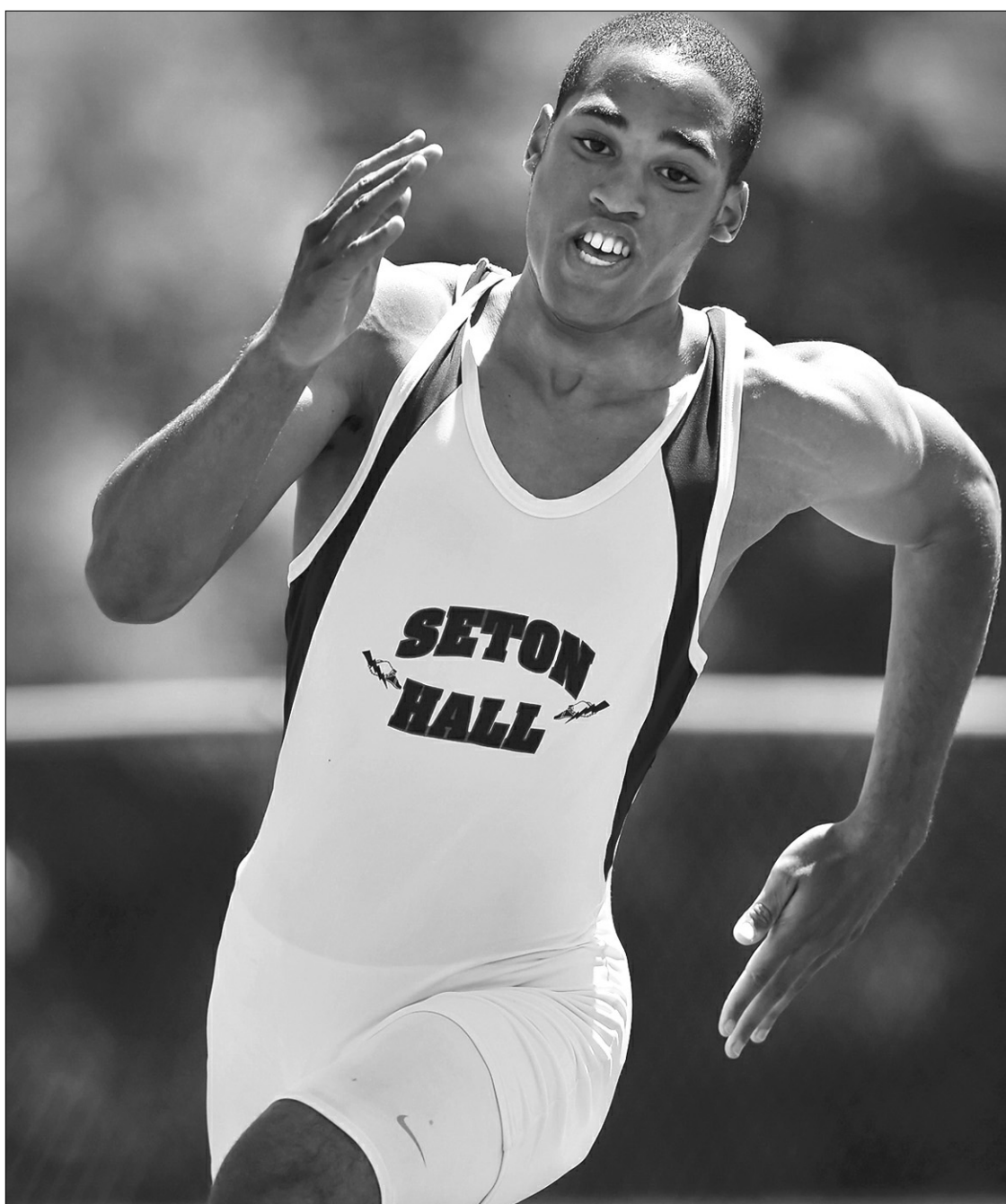


Photo by Rich Morris/courtesy of SHP

Babe Ruth Baseball fall tryouts to be held

Bloomfield Babe Ruth League will be sponsoring an 18-and-under traveling fall baseball team, which will compete at the Cerbo Baseball League AAA level.

Tryouts will be held Aug. 25 at the Bloomfield Middle School field from 6-8 p.m. For more information, call 973-743-4440.

Bloomfield resident Clayton Parros, above, sprints during a meet this past spring. Parros set the state record in the 400-meters in 45.71 in the Great Southwest Invitational in Albuquerque, N.M.

BHS lineman ranked No. 4 in Essex County

By JR Parachini
Staff Writer

One of the state's top independent talent evaluators is anxiously looking forward to another high school football season.

North Arlington resident Dennis McCarthy of the "McCarthy Report" is counting the days before he gets a chance to see who might just become the next NFL player to come out of New Jersey.

McCarthy ranks players from all over the state, with his "McCarthy Report" now published professionally for 21 years. His annual book is offered only to colleges, with as many as 75 big and small schools subscribing to it.

Bloomfield defensive lineman Kristjan Sokoli is ranked No. 4.

McCarthy, 67, has been scouting high school football players in New Jersey now for more than 50 years, going back to his days as a high school student at St. Joseph of the Palisades in West New York (the school closed this June) and continuing as an undergraduate student at Notre Dame, where he graduated from in 1965. McCarthy graduated from St. Joe's in June of 1960.

Beginning in 1994, he and his sons David and Ryan expanded the business to video taping players on an annual basis.

Below is his Top 10 pre-season Class of 2010 seniors from Essex County, with each player's projected college positions:

McCarthy's Essex County Top 10 seniors for 2009:

1-Khalid Jordan, OL, (6-5, 305), Shabazz: "He attends Arts High School and wants to go into TV production. His mother is on the staff at Arts High School. She waits outside with the SUV and drives him down to practice and he's there. I saw this huge kid, a right tackle. He's so ath-

letic for his size. I think he can also play defense. He's a first team all-stater in my book, on my list. We gave him a very good rating in the state. He's being under-recruited."

2-Shane Harris, CB, (6-0, 190), Montclair: "I saw him as a sophomore running back and corner and I couldn't find any cornerback in the state that I liked better. He's a physical kid and he would be the left corner because he's a thick kid for the running side."

3-Nick Herrmann, DB, (6-1, 195), Belleville: "Great all-around player. He's a prototypical 'football player.' I would project him as a strong safety in college. He does everything. He throws the ball, he catches the ball and he hits a ton."

"Would he grow in to be an outside linebacker at some school at maybe 220? Yes, that could be. Right now I'm going to call him a strong safety."

4-Kristjan Sokoli, DL, (6-5, 235), Bloomfield: "Raw-boned kid. It's all upside for him. He was hurt a little bit in his career. The future is his and we're going to see how he develops."

5-Kyle Gayle, S, (6-1, 195), Montclair: "You think of him as a receiver when we first saw him as a sophomore, but then when you watch him in a game and the way he hits at safety, he doesn't have the foot speed to be a receiver. His best shot is at safety."

6-Quadir Pendleton, QB, (6-3, 175), Montclair: "He's one of the top 15 quarterbacks in the state, I would say. He's a good thrower, quite accurate, he can fling the ball." Pendleton recently transferred from East Orange Campus.

7-Joe Ligas, DL/LB, (6-1, 235), Cedar Grove: "He's in the Herrmann class as a consummate football player. Not a big guy, he plays out-

side in a four-man line for Cedar Grove, but he may project as a line-backer. He can run, he can move.

"He will probably play in college right where he is at defensive end."

8-Rashon Evans, RB, (5-9, 155), Irvington: "He's a blur, fast as a hiccup. He knows where the end zone is. He's a guy who I would not be shocked if he's like the leading scorer in the state, with 130 points or whatever it might be."

9-James Colson, WR, (6-2, 190), Belleville: "He transferred from my old high school, St. Joe's in West New York. I saw him as a freshman when they hosted Metuchen and Metuchen had a great wide receiver in DeJuan Miller, who is now playing at Oklahoma. As a true freshman he shut down Miller, who was the best receiver in the state. He's a big kid. He impressed me. He had academic problems and couldn't play his sophomore year."

10-Antonio Sibilia, LB, (6-1, 210), Nutley: "He's a promising looking linebacker."

McCarthy said it's not a strong year for individual talent in Essex County.

"I don't know why, but it isn't," McCarthy said. "It's a cycle. Last year it wasn't. In Essex County you had Joshua Evans (of Irvington) and Carlo Calabrese (of Verona). These guys were All-Americans and they could be in college some day."

Evans and Calabrese are now true freshman defensive players at Florida and Notre Dame, respectively.

Evans is No. 24 on the Florida roster and listed as Josh and a defensive back at 6-2, 185. Calabrese is No. 44 on the Notre Dame roster and listed as a linebacker at 6-1, 235.

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