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# The Intelligencer

## Change for the better

**By: DOM COSENTINO**  
 Burlington County Times

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Tom Mallon is still the same guy he was a year ago. He's still running track for Central Bucks South, and he's still determined and focused and working hard, just like he was at the start of last season.

Nope. Not much has changed at all.

Well, except for just one thing — one rather significant thing, in fact.

Mallon, a junior, is a PIAA champion now. Last May, as a sophomore, he had won a Class AAA state title in the 800 meters — annually among the closest, most competitive races at Shippensburg — and he did it by finishing in 1 minute, 52.35 seconds, besting a field in which all eight medal-winners had finished within 2.04 seconds of one another.

“Our training has been a lot harder than it was last year,” Mallon said. “That’s pretty much been the only thing that’s really changed.”

Mallon included his teammates in what he said there because, in addition to his own individual exploits, he’ll be running with a 4 x 800-meter relay team that had won the PTFCA indoor state title last month in rather impressive fashion.

Mallon, Jeff Dickson, Dave Manion and Matt Poiesz finished in 7:49.01 — just .02 shy of the meet record of 7:48.99 North Penn’s vaunted group from last year had established.

Then, on March 13, the Titans placed third in the Nike Indoor National meet (7:51.33) — a race Ablemarle (Va.) won in an astounding 7:36.99, destroying the national record by more than five seconds — while Mallon was second in the open 800 in 1:53.29.

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“We know we can do these big things now,” Mallon said. “I guess we’ve just been training a lot harder, with the mentality that we know we can be the best in the country.”

Last season and even into this winter, Titans coach Mike Cox had plans to have Mallon run the 1,600 — a longer race that could be better suited to Mallon’s long-striding running style. For now, however, those plans are on hold.

“We were going to start moving him up and we were going to train him to do some miles in the winter, but right now the 800 is his best event,” Cox said. “Coming back, it’s probably wiser to do the 800 and doubling up with the 4 x 800.”

Mallon said that starting this winter the Titans’ practices had become more intense, often lasting up to twice as long as last year’s. He had begun the winter by training in 1,000-meter intervals in anticipation of running longer races, and while he and his 4 x 800 teammates have transitioned into more speed work, the longer workouts have helped his endurance.

“Our practices are so competitive,” he said. “We all push each other — one guy pushes the next guy, and he just pushes the next guy ahead of him. I actually enjoy going to practice right now just because it’s fun and competitive and everything.”

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