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# The Intelligencer

## Relay Royalty

**By: DOM COSENTINO**  
The Intelligencer

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SHIPPENSBURG - Tom Mallon described the final 50 meters as "a blur." He said he "couldn't remember anything," which means that as he neared the finish line, he probably couldn't hear the cheering crowd and he probably couldn't sense the genuine air of anticipation that had suddenly taken over Seth Grove Stadium.

"I started dying at the 50," he would say later. "But I had to get there. I had to get to the line because it was so important to us."

What Mallon could do was see the clock. And, at the finish, as his striding gait had slowed to a stagger, what was once a blur had suddenly become crystal clear: He and his Central Bucks South teammates - Jeff Dickson, Dave Manion and Matt Poiesz - had done it.

Of course, actually winning a Class AAA championship in the boys 4 x 800-meter relay at Saturday's PIAA track and field championships was never really the issue. The Titans were supposed to do that, and Mallon was a good 15 to 20 meters ahead of the rest of the field when he was done. Just another day at the office.

But what really whipped the crowd into that cheering frenzy, and what really had anyone who was paying any attention still shaking their heads about it hours later, was what Dickson, Manion, Poiesz and Mallon had done to 27 years of PIAA and National Federation of High Schools history.

Dickson, Manion, Poiesz, Mallon. That's what the record books for both the PIAA and the NFHS will say now. And next to those names, there will be a time that says 7 minutes, 33.48 seconds. Gone are Wissahickon's revered PIAA and NFHS marks of 7:36.24, marks that had stood since 1982.

Believe it.

"Every day we've been at practice, we've been talking about how badly we want to get this," Dickson said. "This whole week, we've just been focusing only on getting that record. And I guess it paid off."

Other teams around the country had run faster than Wissahickon's mark in recent years, but the NFHS only recognizes records from state championship meets. Two that had done better were Albemarle (Va.) and Morris Hills (N.J.), who went 7:30.67 and 7:31.60, respectively, at last month's Penn Relays - the same remarkable race in which CB South was third in 7:36.93.

Story Images: [1](#), [2](#), [3](#)

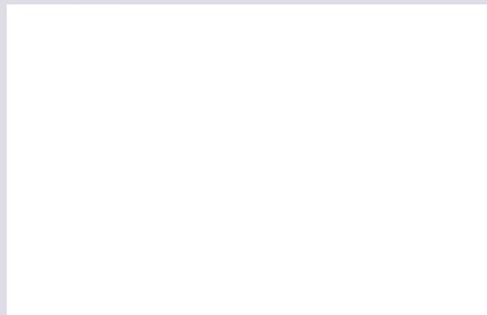


PA Track and Field Championships at Shippensburg University. C.B. South 4x800 relay members Dave Manion (left) and Jeff Dickson (right) greet teammate Tom Mallon (center) after he finished the final leg of their relay, which set a national high school record. --Steve Gengler / Staff Photo

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Since then, the Titans had been building for this. Last week, they ran 7:37.43 to erase 1982 Wissahickon's mark at the District One championships. They then spent the past week tapering to prepare for a peak performance here.

And that's just what they got, with Upper Dublin a distant second in 7:40.04.

Dickson went first, turning in a personal-best 1:55.4 leadoff that had him even with North Penn's Justin Kohl when he handed the baton to Manion, who then went 1:55.5 - just shy of his PR of 1:55.2 - and was a



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bit behind NP's Nick Burkwit at the end of his leg.

NP's Kohl, Burkwit, Sam Burnett and Brian Quintrell were fourth in 7:42.47. Souderton's Dan Meuleners, Alec Jachwak, Jake Portock and Craig Heckman sixth in 7:43.69.

Poiesz's split time was 1:53.2, which equaled his PR, and by the time the last of the Titans' three seniors had handed off to Mallon, a junior, CB South had a sizable lead.

It was a matter of when, not if.

"I would have like to have run a little faster, but I obviously can't complain," Poiesz said.

Sensing he needed to make a push, Mallon kicked it in with about 300 meters to go, which is why he began to tire down the stretch. But his split was an astonishing PR of 1:49.0.

Mallon, the defending open 800 champion, then came back several hours later to defend his title in 1:52.77.

"We knew they could it," said Mike Cox, the Titans' coach. "I'm proud of them, not because of what they've accomplished, but because of the commitment that they've made and how much they've grown as elite athletes. I said, 'You only have one thing left, and that is to run your best.' "

According to the record books, that's just what they did.

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