

## NICK CIOLKOWSKI

MCQUAID

**Grade:** Senior.

**Parents:** Mary Lee Ciolkowski of Perinton and Ed Ciolkowski of Webster.

**Academics:** 92 average.

**Season highlights:** Placed 11<sup>th</sup> at Foot Locker regionals (15:47.2, 1.5 seconds from qualifying for nationals). 12<sup>th</sup> at Class A states (16:03.3, 16<sup>th</sup> overall). Won Jesuit championships in NYC (12:40.27 for 4K, breaking Robert Hurlbut's McQuaid record). Won Class A sectionals (16:18.0, second overall). Won Chittenango Invitational varsity race II (16:23.3).

**Future:** Considering Villanova, Elon University or SUNY Binghamton to study biochemistry.

**About me:** Lives in Perinton. Two younger brothers, Matt and Evan, are also McQuaid students. Three-time AGR selection. Enjoys music by the Beatles, Of Monsters and Men and the Denver, Colo. band the Lumineers. Favorite athletes Emil Zatopek and teammate Donny Glavin. Also runs indoor and outdoor track.

**Above:** McQuaid's Nick Ciolkowski placed 11<sup>th</sup> at the Foot Locker regionals. The senior is considering running at Villanova, Elon University or SUNY Binghamton.

CARLOS ORTIZ/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

# McQuaid's Ciolkowski regroups to finish strong

JIM CASTOR

Nick Ciolkowski blew out his left hip trying to set a record at a 35-mile track-athon benefit last summer.

"It was dumb," he admitted, the timing all wrong to bust out a 19-hour effort just before the start of cross country season. "All those left turns wrecked me good."

Mid-September, the only thing the McQuaid senior remembers at the finish of the Victor Invitational was an EMT "telling me to roll over" after a finish-line collapse from misjudging the course and his fitness level.

A week later he dropped out of the McQuaid Invitational 500 yards from the finish line, in eighth place and on pace to run a 14-minute, 55-second three mile. He said he was discouraged he wasn't higher.

"It's been quite a season," Ciolkowski said after wrapping up a great race at Foot Locker regionals that clinched his Runner of the Year selection on the tenth All-Greater Rochester boys cross country team. He joins 13 others and coach of the year Chris Compson of Pittsford Mendon, whose team won its second straight state title. "Lots of ups and downs," Ciolkowski said. "I've overcome a lot and I've grown a great deal as a runner and as a person."

All agree — and that includes Nick, his coach, Todd Stewart, and his mom — that McQuaid was "the tipping point," as Nick puts it. "I came to understand there had to be less self and more team in my approach. My coach and my mom both stressed that."

Mom is Mary Lee Ciolkowski, a Ph.D analytical chemist who holds patents for ophthalmic molecular compositions, a Boston Marathon finisher (2008) and for now an at-home mom with three teenagers in a single-parent household.

"Nick is very self-motivated and very hard on himself," she said. "His ability is amazing. But I've tried to help him deal with disappointment, when you don't achieve a goal. Even though cross country is an individual performance, you have to keep in mind you're part of a team. Your teammates are counting on you to cross that finish line with them."

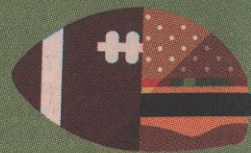
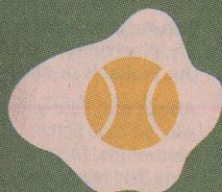
With his hip finally healed and his head in the right place, Ciolkowski strung together an exceptional second half of the season. He won the Section V Class A title, was 12<sup>th</sup> at states and then won that Jesuit championship race at Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx two weeks before returning to the same place for Foot Locker regionals, where he was 11<sup>th</sup>. He missed a trip to nationals by 1.4 seconds.

"He's gone through a lot of frustrations," said Stewart, rating Nick among two or three of McQuaid's all-time great distance runners, including state champion Robert Hurlbut, the AGR Runner of the Year in 2011. "But he's the perfect kid to work with. He does everything you ask and then some."

"After McQuaid, we established a new game plan and stuck with it. He essentially let the past go and created a new future."

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