



The 1983 PIAA State Class AA Champion Track Team remains the only team state championship earned by a Greenville program. Under the direction of Hall of Fame Coach John Kokoski, the Trojans amassed 36 team points to best McConnellsburg by 1.5 points. The title came down to the 1600-meter relay in which the Trojan squad, comprised of Tim Manes, Ken Hazlett, John Weaver, and Brian Herrick, set a new school record of 3.23.00 to finish second and secure the team title.

Team points were scored in the following events:

Javelin	Matt Bendig	4 th Place (4 points)	
800-Meter Run	Tim Manes	1 st Place (10 points)	
1600-Meter Run	Brian Herrick	4 th Place (4 points)	
3200-Meter Relay	Herrick, Ken Hazlett, Steve Snyder,		Manes
1 st Place (10 points)			
1600-Meter Relay	Herrick, Hazlett, John Weaver, Manes	2 nd Place (8 points)	

Frank Stratiff, a local educator, one-time coach, and noted writer, penned a “Timeless Tribute” for *The Record-Argus* on June 26, 2013 that captured the essence of the 1983 track team’s accomplishment. Thanks go out to *Record-Argus* Editor Caleb Stright for permission to reprint that article.

The '83 GHS Track Team: Teeming with character, leadership & sweet memories

Worthy accomplishments are rarely, if ever, solo performances.

The 1983 Greenville High track team’s performance at the Class AA state track meet is proof that it takes more than one person to spell victory.

Winning the state track title that year called for a team effort, an all-out effort to bring the coveted track title to Greenville.

Everyone had a niche to fill, a role to play, a performance to meet.

According to then-head track coach John Kokoski, “The 1983 state championship opportunity actually began at the state meet in 1982. In '82, we had a very good state meet in both the 3200-meter relay, in which we were champs, and

in the 1600-meter relay, in which we placed second. We really made a good showing that year.”

It’s called laying the foundation.

In winning the 3200-meter relay in 1982, the Trojans set a new state record with a time of 7.51.3, a record that stood for nearly a quarter century, 22 years to be exact.

No mean feat.

The 1982 team was made up largely of juniors who, according to Kokoski, “had some potential.” That year, the 3200-meter relay was composed of juniors Brian Herrick, Kenny Hazlett, Steve Snyder and Tim Manes, the core of the team’s potential.

“If they had a good season in ’83 and stayed healthy, they had a chance at a national title,” Kokoski said.

Buoyed by what he termed an excellent coaching staff of Doug McElhinny, Gary Hull and Bill Reames, Kokoski said that every year, before track season even started, Kokoski and his assistants would meet to discuss such issues as: Where are we as a team? What’s the season going to look like? Where are our strengths? Where are our weaknesses? They were issues that could spell the difference between victory and defeat come track season.

The result of these discussions was a developmental plan that was carried out in team meetings and practices. Leaving things to chance was not in the cards.

come from the field events.

Matt Bendig took a fourth in the javelin, an event in which he would win the gold the following year.

“As it turned out, those field-event points proved to be quite valuable,” Kokoski said.

Bendig scored points in the javelin, and the GHS runners racked up a lot of points on the track.

But the Trojans were still in second place.

Only the 1,600-meter relay remained. While other events were taking place, Greenville’s coaches were calculating where they stood.

“McConnellsburg, the team we had to beat, did not have a team in the 1600-meter relay, and they were six points ahead of us,” Kokoski said. “I found our 1600-meter relay team in the GHS tent. They were dragging. They were really, really exhausted. I simply said, ‘Boys, you have one race left. You each have one lap to run. That’s all. One more quarter-mile, and your high school track careers will be over. We need eight points to win the state title. We have to finish first or second in order for us to win the meet.’”

“OK, coach,” was the relay team’s reply. The four runners — Herrick, John Weaver, Hazlett and Manes — had their work cut out for them. The 1600-meter relay would turn out to be dramatic.

Manes, the fastest at the quarter mile, was again the anchor.

“As it turned out, the top- seeded team in the 1600-meter relay was in the lead, with Greenville second,” Kokoski said. “They were really busting us. When it came down to Manes, we wondered if he could make up the distance with the leader or at least maintain second place.

“Manes, a race-horse runner, got the baton and started to close on the leader, but it was clear he wasn’t going to catch him. Could he get far enough ahead of the third-place runner to take second place? As they came off the turn, a runner from Eisenhower High School was closing on Tim, a runner he had beaten two years running in the 800 meters.

“We weren’t worried about first place anymore,” he said. “On the straight away, with only a few meters to go, they were shoulder to shoulder. We are screaming at the top of our lungs! It looked as if Tim was running out of gas. They hit the finish line together. Photo finish! It took 20 minutes to interpret the photo. When the interpretation was

announced, Tim took second, with the runner from Eisenhower third. Tim's second-place finish gave us the state title. An exciting finish to a hard, hard weekend.

"The '83 team had tremendous character," Kokoski said. "They took pride in winning. They were willing to do everything that had to be done to get into position to win. They were leaders. They created an atmosphere for winning by their work ethic. Their goals were supported by a work ethic — every day. Everybody had a role to play.

"You take away Matt Bendig's points in the javelin, or you take away Brian Herrick's points in the 1600, or you take away the exciting victory in the 1600-meter relay, and we don't win," he said. "Everyone's contribution led to our winning the state championship. Credit goes to them."

Kokoski emphasized that he had a group of coaches who excelled at what they did and who took pride in their particular area, and a group of kids who wanted to win, who set goals, who were willing to pay the price to win, to achieve their goals.

As coaches, our job was to mesh the kids as best we could, prepare them as best we could and give them a chance to win," he said. "As I've said, the goal at state was to get kids to the medal stand. To stand in front of 10,000 people and say, 'I am one of the best, or the best, in the state.' That gave each kid memories that they'll never forget. And you can't take away the memories. That has to be special."

Until West Middlesex High School won the state AA track title this year, Greenville was the only Mercer County track team to win a state track title, a feat that stood for 30 years.

"I get the most satisfaction out of seeing what they've done since graduating," Kokoski said. "Good family people, good community people, wherever they are. Seeing what they've done with their lives, and that they've been successful each in their own way, is special.

"We gave them the best we had, and they gave us the best they had," he concluded.