

The Caledonia High School boys cross country team is moving closer to the front of the pack.

Buoyed by sophomore James Luttrell's second-place finish, the CHS boys finished third Saturday at the Mississippi High School Activities Association (MHSAA) Class 4A Cross Country State Championships at Choctaw Trails in Jackson.

West Lauderdale's Hunter Walker finished first with a time of 17 minutes, 10.63 seconds to edge Luttrell (personal-best 17:13.03) for the individual title. West Lauderdale won the team title with 35 points, followed by Senatobia (99) and Caledonia (101). West Lauderdale and Senatobia also finished first and second in 2023. Caledonia was eighth (223 points).

“The guys went out and really performed well,” said first-year CHS cross country coach Michele Shepherd, who also coaches the girls team. “I try to tell them even at practice that every race is different and don’t focus on somebody else’s time. I told them it could be anybody’s race and you have to do your best. I feel very confident all seven boys did their best and I was so proud of them. I told them after the meet they really made one and two work for their spots, especially placing only two points behind the state runner-up.”

Dylan Reed (fourth, 17:27.7), Carter Reed (16th, 18:30.42), Bryan Chora (37th, 19:23.69), Juan Gutierrez (42nd, personal-best 19:33.27), Haiden Price (52nd, 20:04) and Ian Hurt (82nd, 21:19.96) rounded out Caledonia’s competitors.

In 2023, Dylan Reed finished third (17:44.13) to lead his team’s eighth-place finish at the Class 4A meet. Carter Reed was 22nd (18:44.17) and Chora was 99th (21:33.94).

“It was very intense,” Dylan Reed said. “We had a close competition with West Lauderdale and a couple of other teams.”

Reed, a senior, and his teammates said they all did their best to leave everything they had on the course. He said he didn’t have the energy he wanted to at the end of the race and wasn’t able to hold off Luttrell’s kick in the final 200 meters.

Luttrell’s finish bodes well for the future considering Chora is a junior, Gutierrez is a freshman and Hurt is a freshman. Carter Reed and Price are seniors. Even though the MHSAA hasn’t announced its reclassification for the 2025-26 school year, indications point to Caledonia High moving up to Class 5A.

“We really put in a lot of work in recovery to make sure we were energized and ready for the meet,” Luttrell said. “We got there and we had the energy going. Some of us weren’t feeling our greatest, but we tried to get by that. I think we really worked hard as a team bringing each other up and trying to do well.”

Chora said the third-place finish will serve as a valuable lesson for the returning competitors.

“I think we all had good energy and vibes going into the race,” Chora said. “Regardless of the results, the guys gave it their all, and I am proud of all the guys for what they did.”

Shepherd praised Dylan Reed and Chora and Ella Shepherd on the girls team for serving as captains and providing leadership and helping her learn so much in her initial season. She said she is looking forward to a bright future with both teams.

“I am really proud of both teams,” Shepherd said. “They helped me and mentored me. I asked for a lot of feedback from them. They were great giving me feedback and telling me things we could do better.

“They have really put in the work and the effort and they deserve all the credit. I am really proud of how the season turned out and how they developed as a team.”