

PRESS RELEASE

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ESSEX COUNTY FREEHOLDERS HONOR MONTCLAIR HIGH SCHOOL'S STATE CHAMPION FENCERS & SWIMMER

Charlotte O'Leary and Boys' Épée Squad Honored during May 6th Meeting

(Newark, NJ) – Freeholder Brendan Gill of Montclair honored state champion athletes from Montclair High School during the Freeholder Board's Tuesday, May 6, 2014, meeting at the Hall of Records. The athletes honored were Charlotte O'Leary, the state champion in the 100-yard breaststroke, and the members of the boy's épée squad: Lucas Della Bella (captain), Matthew Schattner and Hudson Harriman-Smith (squad mate Gabriel Canaux was unable to attend the presentation). Della Bella was also honored for having won the 2014 individual épée state championship. The athletes were accompanied by their coaches, Ed Koenigsfest (swimming) and Michael McTigue (fencing), as well as Athletic Director Jeff Gannon.



During the Freeholder Board's May 6th meeting at the Hall of Records in Newark, Freeholder Brendan Gill (front row, far right) honored Montclair High School's state champion 100-yard breaststroke swimmer, Charlotte O'Leary (front row, center) and the Boys' Épée Squad: Lucas Della Bella (back row, center), Matthew Schattner (front row, 2nd from left) and Hudson Harriman-Smith (front row, 2nd from right). They were joined by MHS Athletic Director Jeff Gannon (front row, far left), Swimming Coach Ed Koenigsfest (back row, left) and Fencing Coach Michael McTigue (back row, right). **PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON**

“As a proud Montclair High School alumnus”, said Freeholder Gill, “I’m delighted to welcome everyone to ‘Montclair High School Appreciation Night’ at the Board of Freeholders, because tonight we will honor Mounties who won state championships in swimming *and* fencing. Congratulations!”

Charlotte O'Leary, a 15-year old sophomore, became the first MHS female swimmer to win an individual state championship since 1987 when she captured her 100-yard breaststroke crown on March 2nd, posting a personal best time of 1:03.54. She won the same event at this year's Essex County Championships by breaking the record she set the previous year. She was also a member of the MHS county champion 200-year medley and 400-year freestyle relay teams.

"Charlotte, you've made your family, the entire Montclair community and the County of Essex very proud", said Gill, "and since you still have another two years to compete, it looks to me that the sky's the limit, and that we will have back here again a couple more times!"

"Thank you so much, this is such an honor", said Charlotte. Her coach, Ed Koenigsfest, added, "This was a tremendous season for Charlotte. We're so happy for her and really look forward to seeing what she will accomplish in the next two years."

The épée squad won its second consecutive crown at the NJSIAA Squad Fencing Championships on February 22nd, and compiled a combined record of 36-9 this season. Lucas Della Bella, the squad's 18-year old senior captain, posted a 92% win record during the Division 3 qualifying tournament, and then went 14-0 at the squad tournament. He works out at the Lilov Fencing Academy and competes at local and national competitions, including the USOC Junior Olympics and USFA National Championship. He maintains a GPA over 4.0 and will attend Georgia Tech in the fall. Senior Matthew Schattner compiled an 80% win record at the Division 3 qualification tournament and was 11-4 in the Squad Tournament. He works out at Espada Fencing Club, competes at local competitions and will attend Brandeis University. Hudson Harriman-Smith, a junior, stepped in as a substitute and then compiled a 92% win record at the Division 3 qualification tournament insuring the squad's participation in the NJSIAA State Tournament Championship. He also qualified for the NJSIAA State Épée Individual Championship Tournament where he finished 15th in the state. He works out at Lilov Fencing Academy and competes at local competitions. Senior Gabriel Canaux went 11-4 record in the squad tournament, works out at the NY Athletic Club, and competes on national and international stages, including the USOC Junior Olympics, USFA Senior Nationals, and Junior and Senior World Cups representing the United States. He will attend Columbia University.

Della Bella was also honored for having won the 2014 individual épée state championship with a commanding 5-0 fence-off victory on March 1st. His stellar 2013-14 season resulted in *The Star-Ledger* naming him to the 1st Team Fencing All-State. He was also named to the NJSIAA 1st Team All-State, and to the Tri-County Conference 1st Team All-Conference. Lucas posted a 100% win record in the "A" pools at the prestigious Cetrulo Tournament.

"Gentlemen, congratulations for another great, great season", said Gill. "You've been the dominant épée squad in New Jersey for two years in a row, and that is a great accomplishment to take with you as you close-out your high school careers." Gill concluded by joking with Harriman-Smith, "And Hudson, no pressure of course, but we will see you back here again next year to celebrate the squad's third consecutive state championship."

Speaking on behalf of his teammates, Schattner thanked their families, coaches and everyone at the high school adding, "It was a great season and we're all very happy." Harriman-Smith also thanked the parents "...for driving their sons to meets, buying equipment and putting up with all of this." He also thanked Coach McTigue, saying "without him, where would we be." Della Bella concurred with his teammates and concluded by saying, "We've had an awesome squad, and we're really going to miss it a lot next year."

“The thing I’m most proud of with these guys is the way they competed”, said Coach McTigue. “They kept an even keel, supported one another, and despite the grueling schedule, kept a sense of humor. It was a pleasure to coach them.”

Athletic Director Jeff Gannon congratulated the fencers and Charlotte, and expressed his appreciation to Freeholder Gill “for having events like this that bring awareness to what our student-athletes do outside of the classroom.” He commented on the student-athletes’ high level of academic achievement saying, “to be able to do that and compete at such a high level is worthy of a great deal of praise, and is something so many in the Montclair community are so proud of.”

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