

## RUNNING

**Warwick sophomore Behailu Bekele-Arcuri finishes second in the Classic 5K on Sunday in Middletown. He will be competing in the 3,200-meter relay in Friday's state high school championships.**

[PHOTOS BY KELLY MARSH/FOR THE TIMES HERALD-RECORD]



# 5K winner Albano gets his weekly kicks

**Warwick standout Bekele-Arcuri places second**

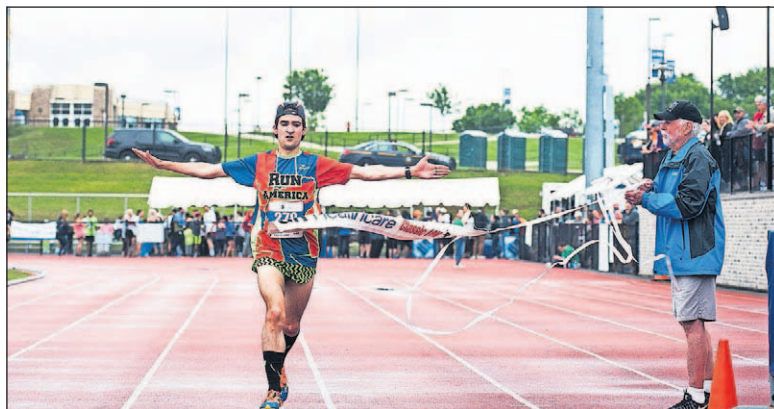
**By C Jackson Cowart**  
Times Herald-Record

MIDDLETOWN – Every morning before work, Rob Albano runs 10 miles. Every weekend, he runs a 5K. Soon, he says, he'll run one in under 15 minutes.

He finished Sunday's Classic Rowley 5K in 15 minutes, 23 seconds, earning him first-place honors. He was challenged for much of the race by Warwick sophomore Behailu Bekele-Arcuri, who came within 96 seconds of Albano, a former NCAA Division II star, in the race's finish at Faller Field.

"The last mile I was hurting," said Albano, of Mahwah, N.J. "But he faded off, so I was able to kind of coast it in."

Albano, the most decorated cross-country runner in Felician College (N.J.) history, added the Classic 5K to his racing agenda, in part, to meet Frank Shorter, Middletown's famed Olympic marathon gold medalist. Albano said he's raced every weekend



**Rob Albano, of Mahwah, N.J., wins the Classic 5K on Sunday in a time of 15:23.**

since late March, finishing fifth in last weekend's Ridgewood Run.

He gets plenty of practice in his job as the track coach at Valley Middle School in Oakland, N.J., where his students serve as symbolic pacers for their coach.

"I'll send them off and I'll try to chase them down," Albano said.

But Albano was nearly chased down on Sunday by Bekele-Arcuri, one of the world's fastest teen milers and the Varsity845 male runner of the year in 2016. Both runners shot out to fast

starts for the first two miles. That's when Bekele-Arcuri eased up, giving Albano the final stretch.

After all, the Warwick High School coaches wouldn't want their sophomore star to waste his energy before the 3,200-meter relay in Friday's state championships – or for nationals after that.

"It's been racing day after day after day," Bekele-Arcuri said. "My body has been taking a beating."

April Rutledge, the female

5K winner, ran Sunday's race just two and a half months after giving birth to her daughter, Riley. The New York native would have trained more, too, had doctors not forced her to wait four weeks before running. Rutledge typically runs the 10K and 5K each year, but she sat out the former this year. "I'm not in shape for that yet," she said. "Maybe next year."

Three months ago, Aleks Tangen – a foreign exchange student at Middletown High School in 2006-07 – designed and ran his own 110K path in Norway and raise money for refugees from Iraq and Syria. He suffered from pneumonia through the month of March, recovered in April and started racing again in May. On Sunday, he finished the Classic 10K on his old high-school track. Easy, right? "It takes a toll on you," he said. "It's not a difficult course compared to a 110K, but as a 10K, it's pretty tough."

One of Tangen's former Middletown track coaches, Wayne Beam, ran his final Classic 10K on Sunday. Beam

says he's been running this race since 1981, when he was 18. He'll be 56 in three weeks, and he'll be living in Florida by the time next year's race rolls around. So he took it slow this time, one final hurrah for the race he directed for years. "I figured I'd run this one more time, for old-time's sake," he said. "It was fun just to go around the roads one more time."

For a 10th year in a row, the Classic partnered with Josh's Team – an organization that raises money for local scholarships for disabled students. It's in memory of Joshua Stamm, a race regular who died in 2007 of ataxia-telangiectasia (A-T), and the Classic 10K donates a portion of every entry fee for team members to the scholarship fund. Stamm's father, Mark, estimated that 10 percent of the Classic 5K runners registered through Josh's team, including him and his son, Matt. "To do an event like this," Matt said, "it really brings out his spirit in the best way possible."

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