

## James Donahue and the Sentinel Striders Named Co-Winners of USATF – New England's Athlete of the Month for December 2014



*Photo: Youth Runner  
Magazine*

BOSTON – **James Donahue**, age 10 of Reading, MA, and the **Sentinel Striders**, based in Smithfield, RI, are co-winners of USA Track & Field – New England's Athlete of the Month award for December 2014. At the USATF National Junior Olympic Cross Country Championships held on December 14 in San Antonio, Donahue won the 3K championship race in the 9-10 year old boys division. Finishing in 10:44.64, James won by nearly 8 seconds in a field of 329 finishers.

Also at the National Junior Cross Country Championships, the Sentinel Striders won the 11-12 year old boys team race, prevailing over a field of 33 teams to win their first national title. Sentinel was led by Sam Toolin who finished 2<sup>nd</sup> in 9:52.17 over the 3K course. The other team members in the top seven included Maxwell DiMuccio, Jack Perreault, Michael Del Sesto, Ashton Burnett, Jack Wilbur and Reilly Johnston.

Donahue, a 5<sup>th</sup> grader at the Killam Elementary School in Reading, never ran competitively before this season, which makes his national championship all the more improbable. He quickly established himself as a top competitor in his youth cross country races. At the New England Association JO championships, he won in a course record of 10:49. The following week, he placed second at the Northeast Regional JOs, qualifying him for the national championships.

In San Antonio, his uncle and running mentor, Bob Bracey, accompanied James on a walk over the course and gave him tactical advice. He noted that after a wide starting area, the course funneled narrowly into the woods within a half-mile. Bracey emphasized the importance of being in the top 5 entering the woods. Further along they came to a hill, and his uncle encouraged him to make a strong move on the uphill. The race played out prophetically. James was third going into the woods and when he reached the hill, he kicked strongly, opening up a 30-40 yard gap and holding that lead all the way to the finish.

In their 33 year history, the Sentinel Striders have had many high moments in cross country. Club teams have won 81 New England JO Championships, placed second twice and third 11 times at the National JO championships, but the Boys 11-12 team is their first national champion.

Sam Toolin, of North Kingstown, finished second in the field of 391 runners, after leading for the first mile. Sam has now earned All-American honors for three straight years. Also earning All-American honors was Max DiMuccio, who finished 17<sup>th</sup> in 10:29. The other scoring members were Jack Perrault in 26<sup>th</sup> place, Michael Del Sesto in 30<sup>th</sup> place and Ashton Burnett in 51<sup>st</sup> position. Once teammates Jack Wilbur and Reilly Johnston crossed the line, the Striders clinched an 81-101 victory over the runner-up Indiana All-Star Running Club.



*Photo: Kristen DiMuccio*