



2.9 miles passed. After turning the corner leading to the long, gradual hill at the state meet, exactly 300 meters remained until the finish line. Glancing at her watch, **Sophie Santucci (8)** checked her pace in order to achieve her goal of completing the race under 20 minutes. "I wanted to get under 20 minutes because I wanted to prove to myself and others that I could beat girls that had better times than me going into the race," she said. Indeed, with seconds to spare, Santucci crossed the finish line in 19:57.1.

Led by Santucci's first place finish, the girls smiled from ear to ear as they excitedly grabbed hold of the championship trophy, reclaiming it from the previous year. And, following the girls' awards, it was not shocking when the boys were then announced as the 1A state champions after placing in the first, second, third, fifth, and ninth place individual positions. Celebrating their fourth consecutive team championship, the boys' team eagerly mounted the stage to accept the state banner and trophy. **Preston Noland (12)** said, "This was the hardest we have worked for a season, and I was super happy to see everyone's hard work pay off, especially because it was my last season on the team." By "dropping the hammer" through their hard work each practice, both teams ensured that success was possible.



SURGING

1. Running ahead of a Hickory Flat competitor, John Michael Foster (11) finishes the state meet race in fifth place. 2. Ben Woolhouse (12) sprints to the finish at the Myrtle Invitational. 3. After passing over slippery ground, Jon Scott (8) finishes the race, securing his spot as the team's seventh runner at state meet. 4. Bounds Simmons (8) wins his first two mile race of the season.