

SCCAL finals

SOQUEL — Varsity results from Saturday's Santa Cruz Athletic League track & field championships at Soquel High:

- BOYS**
Team Scores
 1. Aptos 123½, 2. San Lorenzo Valley 123, 3. Soquel 84¼, 4. Watsonville 79, 5. Monte Vista Christian 29, 6. Harbor 27¼, 7. Santa Cruz 19.
- Top Individuals**
1,000 Meters — 1. DeWald, Soquel (4:19.67), 2. Passanisi, Aptos (4:20.21), 3. Plummer, SLV (4:29.99)
110 High Hurdles — 1. Seymour, SLV (15.21), 2. Mullins, Soquel (16.04), 3. Dvbdahl, Soquel (16.08)
400 Meters — 1. Seymour, SLV (51.64), 2. Morris, MVC (52.12), 3. Affleck, Soquel (52.91)
100 Meters — 1. Satterfield, SLV (11.54), 2. King, Watsonville (11.69), 3. DaValle, MVC (11.81)
800 Meters — 1. Passanisi, Aptos (1:59.30), 2. Ruelas, Wats (2:01.24), 3. Torres, Aptos (2:01.71)
300 Int. Hurdles — 1. Seymour, SLV (41.46), 2. Sanders, Soquel (42.85), 3. Crick, Santa Cruz (43.43)
200 Meters — 1. King, Wats (23.42), 2. Mullins, Soquel (23.73), 3. DaValle, MVC (23.76)
3,200 Meters — 1. Passanisi, Aptos (10:00.11), 2. Eckel, Aptos (10:03.69), 3. Plummer, SLV (10:14.10)
4x400 Relay — 1. MVC (3:32.07), 2. SLV (3:32.88), 3. Aptos (3:33.81)
Long Jump — 1. Wong, Aptos (20-02), 2. Sanders, Aptos (20-00.75), 3. McQueen, Harbor (20-00.25)
Triple Jump — 1. Sanders, Aptos (43-08.75), 2. Arvidson, Aptos (41-04), 3. Eastley, Harbor (40-11.50)
Shot Put — 1. Bedolla, Wats (44-11.50), 2. Cales, Aptos (44-04), 3. Beltz, SLV (43-10.50)
Discus — 1. Sanborn, SLV (151-04), 2. Beltz, SLV (137-09), 3. Butler, Aptos (134-10)
High Jump — 1. Lario, Aptos (4-0), 2. Costa, Harbor (4-0), 3. McQueen, Harbor (5-10)
Pole Vault — 1. Mullins, Soquel (12-04), 2. Dvbdahl, Soquel (12-0), 3. Campbell, SLV (10-0)

GIRLS

- Team Scores**
 1. Aptos 158, 2. Harbor 108, 3. SLV 92, 4. Santa Cruz 53, 5. Soquel 47, 6. MVC 36, 7. Watsonville 1
- Top Individuals**
4x100 Relay — 1. Aptos (51.20), 2. Harbor (51.27), 3. Santa Cruz (51.36)
1,000 Meters — 1. Smith, Aptos (5:14.07), 2. Gehrkens, Harbor (5:24.26), 3. Burnham, SLV (5:27.38)
100 Meter Low Hurdles — J. Gordon, Aptos (17.67), 2. Spear, Harbor (17.71), 3. Smith, Soquel (17.77)
400 Meters — 1. Vessey, MVC (59.02), 2. Rauch, SLV (1:02.02), 3. Sullivan, Aptos (1:02.73)
100 Meters — 1. McDonald, Aptos (13.07), 2. Arline, Harbor (13.18), 3. Lynch, Santa Cruz (13.28)
800 Meters — 1. Smith, Aptos (2:23.37), 2. Croghan, Santa Cruz (2:27.18), 3. Sanders, SLV (2:28.32)
300-meter low hurdles — 1. Carver, Harbor (46.93), 2. Sornie, Harbor (49.72), 3. Lynch, Santa Cruz (52.51)
200 Meters — 1. Vessey, MVC (26.43), 2. Arline, Harbor (27.16), 3. Lynch, Santa Cruz (27.51)
3,200 Meters — 1. Smith, Aptos (12:25.39), 2. Gehrkens, Harbor (12:32.89), 3. Seidel, Harbor (12:42.74)
4x400-meter Relay — 1. Aptos (4:14.51), 2. SLV (4:16.46), 3. Santa Cruz (4:20.64)
Long Jump — 1. Anderson (16-7½), 2. Van Vliet, SLV (15-4¼), 3. Wilson, Santa Cruz (14-11¼)
Triple Jump — 1. Anderson, Aptos 34-10, 2. Smith, Aptos 31-11, 3. Vliotch, Aptos 31-3
Shot Put — 1. Tom, Santa Cruz (33-1), 2. Rommel, Soquel (30-4), Eurlind, SLV, 30-3½), 3. Farahbaksh, Aptos (30-0)
Discus — 1. K. McElwain, SLV (106-10), 2. S. McElwain, SLV (101-3), Tomlin, SLV (100-7)
High Jump — 1. Johnson, Harbor (5-1), 2. Costanzo, Aptos (4-8), 3. Passaman, MVC (4-8)
Pole Vault — 1. S. McElwain, SLV (9-0), Ryan, Soquel (7-4), Stanford, Soquel (7-4)

A half step away

Aptos boys edge SLV for crown

By DAVID KIEFER

SOQUEL — All the months of work, the sacrifices made, the pain and perspiration ... all of it came down to a half step ... the difference between a trail of tears and a chaotic celebration of victory.

The record books will list Aptos High as the boys track and field champion of the Santa Cruz Coast Athletic League for 1997, but it can't record the pressure, the anger, the triumph that were the most enduring images.

Only the final score hints at the drama the most crucial Saturday at Soquel High: Aptos 123½, San Lorenzo Valley 123. The ultimate decider ... that half step.

With Aptos holding a 2½-point lead going into the final event, the 4x400 meters relay, the Mariners could finish no further back than one place behind a stronger SLV team. The Aptos team of Jaime Sanchez, Mike DeMartini, Dent Earl, and Jose Torres held its end of the deal by staying in front longer than expected.

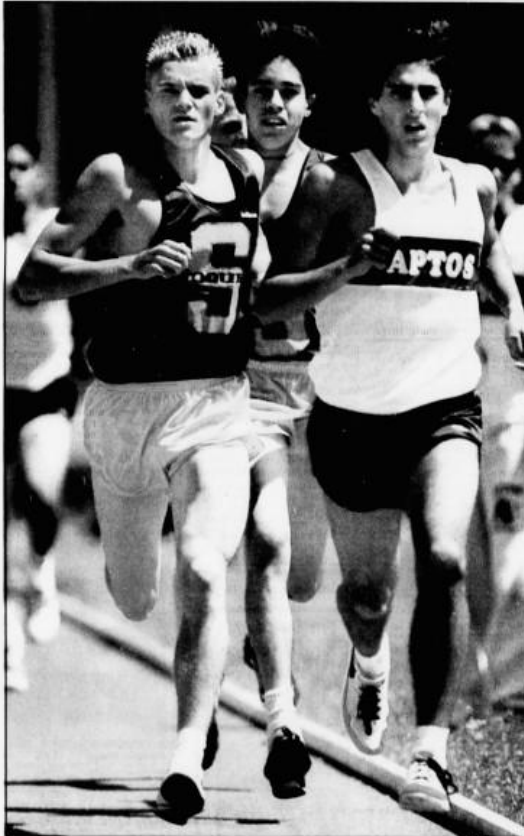
That SLV's Derek Seymour, already a triple winner with a 400 title, would pass on the anchor leg was a foregone conclusion. But Monte Vista Christian, with something to prove of its own, wouldn't surrender the race. SLV couldn't shake Aptos, so Seymour needed to pass MVC's Aaron Fleming to win the meet. It didn't happen ... that half step.

Seymour crossed the line and collapsed, pounding the ground in frustration. Aptos athletes pined on Torres, who held on for third.

The result, an improvement from sixth of seven teams last year to the Mariners' first SCCAL boys title since 1981.

"This means we're no longer kicked around in the SCCAL," said Earl, an alternate who came through big on the third leg. "This is the start of a dynasty."

On the other side, there were a lot of tears and a lot of SLV athletes and coaches who blamed themselves. Among them was hurdler Emerson Sanderson, who probably would have fin-



Aptos High's Gary Passanisi, right, was upset by Soquel's Joma DeWald in the 1,000-meter race.

Boys

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ished second to Seymour in both hurdles races. Sanderson, however, sprained or fractured his ankle Thursday while playing volleyball in SLV coach Gary Grelman's P.E. class.

Sanderson, however, managed to get out six points with a fourth-place in the 110 highs, though he was back on crutches by the end of the meet.

"I would rather lose by 10 or 20," Grelman said.

Aptos had by far the biggest team in the league, with a combined boys and girls program of 140 athletes. But there was doubt that depth could translate into a championship. Coach Mark Dorfman doped the meet with Aptos finishing fourth. His athletes, however, did the same and had the Mariners winning by 10.

Aptos, however, swept the jumping events. Sun Hang Wong pulled the upset in the long (20.2), Mike Sanders in the triple (43.04), and Josh Lanoie in the high (6-9).

But the seeds of victory actually were planted with a loss — A blocking come-from-behind triumph by Soquel's Joma DeWald over Aptos's Gary Passanisi in the 1,000 meters.

Since Passanisi lost in the same manner to DeWald in the league finals last year, he's evolved into one of the best in the state. But DeWald wouldn't surrender that easily. He tucked behind Passanisi's shoulder and chose the home-stretch to make his move. As he pulled ahead in the final meters, DeWald broke out in a huge grin and won the race in 4:19.67, a personal record by 3½ seconds, to Passanisi's 4:20.21. Both broke the meet record of 4:22.0 set by SLV's Joe Rodriguez in 1990.

"He wasn't going to let it get away," Soquel distance coach Jim Clarke said. "He was going to defend his title to the bitter end." DeWald said DeWald. "All the way, I was thinking, 'I want this race. I gave it everything I had.'"

Passanisi couldn't handle it, not this year, not the same way twice. He was determined to get revenge. Though he hadn't planned on running the 800, Passanisi changed his mind, though it would involve a difficult triple, with the 3200 still to be run.

"It stung," Passanisi said. "I had to get rid of the sting." Did he run because DeWald was in the race? "That's the only reason," Passanisi said.

Dorfman advised against it. "Your health is more important than points," he said, but gave Passanisi the option anyway. Still, how would Passanisi deal with it if he lost again?

"This is a gamble, I know," said Dan Gruber, Passanisi's personal coach. "But what an achievement it would be."

Passanisi willed himself to a personal record 1:59.30 while a spent DeWald finished a distant seventh. And followed with a victory in the 3,200, his best event, in a cruise-control time of 10:00.11.

Passanisi admitted that if he didn't lose the 1,600, he wouldn't have run the 800, and therefore Aptos wouldn't have won the meet.

The Mariners, however, still needed some help from MVC. A year ago, MVC won the 4x400 but was disqualified because one runner broke in from his lane too early.

Fleming was on that team and found additional incentive when his 400 race was ruined by a stray hurdle left in his lane, and in that of Watsonville's Aaron Guarrero. Despite a protest from MVC coach Paul Lyons, the race committee declined to re-run the race.

Fleming was livid and took it upon himself to make up for it in the relay. With Brandon DaValle, Stuart Norris, and Brian Dunlap gaining the lead and holding it, Fleming capped off the victory in 3:32.07. The margin of victory ... that half step.

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Mariner girls run away with fourth title in six years

By DAVID KIEFER
 Sentinel staff writer

SOQUEL — Erin McDonald characterized the Aptos High girls track and field team Saturday: unpretentious, enthusiastic, hard-working and exceedingly happy.

McDonald pulled out two of the most dramatic victories of the Santa Cruz Coast Athletic League championships at Soquel High, to lead the Mariners to their fourth title in the past six years.

As a seventh-place finisher in both the 100 and 200 league finals last year, McDonald dedicated herself to getting better, with an off-season weight-lifting program and improved conditioning.

In races decided by fractions of seconds, McDonald's extra work made a difference. She held off Harbor's Jessica Apline and Santa Cruz's Francine Lynch on the anchor of the 4x100 relay and later nosed out Apline again in the 100, running a 13.07.

"She wanted three things," Aptos coach Mark Dorfman said. "To win the relay, the 100, and the team title." It was a hat trick for McDonald.

"This has turned out to be such a rad season," she told Dorfman. "I'm so bummed I'm graduating."

Lake McDonald, the Aptos girls stayed upbeat throughout, performing apparently without the nervousness so much a part of a championship meet. Aptos, which went 6-0 during the SCCAL's dual-meet season, earned 138 points to second-place Harbor's 106 and was part of a Mariner sweep of boys and girls varsity and freshman league titles.

Teammate Anne-Elise Smith was a perfect example. Moments before the 3,200, which would result in her third victory of the day, a distance sweep, Smith was heard saying to a teammate, "I wonder if I should be warming up or not, I've been running all day long."

Dorfman said the attitude is no accident. Aptos sent



Bill Loveloy/Sentinel

Kirsti McElwain of SLV won the varsity discus with a throw of 106-10.

athletes to many tough invitationals and against some of the toughest competition around.

"One of the reasons we do this is when we get to this meet, the pressure's not that great," he said.

Smith completing an easy sweep and appeared ready to try it again afterward. She won the 1600 in 5:14.07, the 800 in 2:23.37, and the 3200 in 12:25.39.

The pressure certainly didn't get to Monte Vista Christian freshman Maggie Vessey. With a track background consisting only of middle school competition, Vessey turned out to be the county's discovery of the season.

Vessey thrashed the field in both the 400 (59.02), winning by 25 meters, and the 200 (26.63), easing up to win by five meters.

MVC coach Paul Lyons said he first realized he had a ringer when he asked her to run a 400 in one of her first practices after coming out late from soccer season.

"Before she even finished that first turn, I thought, 'Thank you, Jesus,'" Lyons said. "God gave her a gift, now she has to take that and really work it."

Vessey said, "The coach started building me up so much, I started to believe it."

Now, she's eager to really see how fast she can run when she's tested by tougher competition in the coming weeks, starting with the Central Coast Section South Trials next Saturday at Soquel.

"I'm looking forward to the next three years," she said.

The athlete with the highest expectations at CCS is Harbor's Carey Carver. But Carver aggravated a

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— Erin McDonald,
 Aptos High runner

groin pull suffered early in the season, had to purposely false-start in one event (the 100 hurdles), and held back while winning her specialty, the 300 low hurdles (46.93).

Carver felt the muscle tighten while running her leg on the 4x100 relay. Now, she has to curtail her training for at least a week.

"I'm in the best shape I've ever been in," she said. "I don't want to lose it."

