

## CENTRAL COAST SECTION TRACK AND FIELD

# Nwachukwu, four-time CIF State qualifier, powers Silver Creek girls

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**GILROY** » Chika Nwachukwu admitted she was winded. Tired. Drained. Well, let's just say fatigued.

After qualifying for four events at next week's California Interscholastic Federation state track and field championships, who can blame the senior sprinter from Silver Creek?

"I am exhausted," said Nwachukwu, with a smile. "But I would say it was a really fun experience. I mean, last year we couldn't have state, but I'm so happy that I made it to this point."

The 102nd version of the state meet returns next weekend to Veterans Memorial Stadium at Buchanan High in Clovis for the first time since 2019 after the COVID-19 pandemic caused a two-year hiatus.

Saturday night at Gilroy High it was a similar story for the Central Coast Section championships, which were canceled in 2020 and relocated to Soquel a year ago.

"It feels right," Silver Creek coach Hector Flores said. "This is where it belongs. It's just beautiful. And now to be able to go to the state meet, to have this accomplishment and now the reward of going to state and being on that stage is such a blessing."

Nwachukwu will be introduced in Clovis as the CCS champion in both the 100- and 300-meter hurdles.

She also finished third in the 100 dash and ran the second leg of a runner-up 400 relay.

Will she compete in all four events at state?

"It's something I'll have to talk over with my coach and we'll see," Nwachukwu said.

Prior to her freshman year, Silver Creek claimed the CCS girls title in 2018. It ended a 31-year drought for the Raiders, who also took home the title in 1977.

While it didn't diminish the accomplishments of teammates such as Jady Ayala, Kristy Huynh and Shayana Tomasetti, Nwachukwu helped to deliver 34



KARL MONDON — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Silver Creek's Chika Nwachukwu won the girls 100-meter hurdles at the CCS Track & Field championships with a time of 14.45 seconds.

out of 51 first-place points for Silver Creek's third section trophy.

"She was just this uncoordinated tall girl freshman year that couldn't run the 100 in under 13 seconds," Flores said. "Then she started to blossom her sophomore year and just as she got good the pandemic hit. But the girls just kept pushing, training, and we got a chance to put it together this year."

Which event might prove to be her favorite in Clovis?

"I love the relay because it's a team event - and I love running with my team," Nwachukwu said. "But I would say it would be both hurdle races, especially the 300. I do love the 100, but the 300 is more of a love-hate relationship. I just love the feeling of pushing and forcing myself to get to the finish line in a good time - coming in first."

Elsewhere

Nwachukwu is both a repeat and double champion, a feat only matched by Stevenson senior Evan Johnson after once again sweeping the boys 100 and 200 dash.

Independence junior Ben Kin Ho Tsang also doubled in the hurdles, including the closest event of the night - two-hundredths of a second ahead of Leland junior Miles Roberts in the 110 meters.

His winning time of 37.32 in the 300 hurdles not only de-

throned Los Altos junior Shawn Toney (2nd, 37.61) but currently ranks third in the state.

"I still couldn't believe that I am both hurdles events champ," Tsang texted on Sunday. "Even though numerous probabilities were repeated in my mind in the week before today, it's still unreal."

Scotts Valley senior Jeremy Kain cruised to victories in the 800 and 1,600 meters, falling short by barely more than half a second of breaking a meet record in the former that belongs to Los Altos' Rick Brown and was set in 1970.

More repeat champions included four members of field events:

Elizabeth Churchill, Aptos (girls high jump, 3 inches higher a 5-9);

Jessi Barry, Valley Christian - except in a different event (girls long jump instead of triple jump);

Andrew Fu, Harker (boys long jump, with top three marks at CCS, including 23-2.5 on final attempt);

Jacob Kiesman, Valley Christian (boys shot put, half an inch longer than last year's mark at 57-1).

The Los Altos boys enjoyed their turn atop the podium prior to prom with a comfortable 63-44 margin of victory over runner-up Bellarmine.