

95 CIF Arco am/pm S:

By Doug Speck - Arcadia HS/Cal Track & Running New
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THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR ASSISTANCE
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It's that late Fall time of year and once again State Championship Cross-Country time, with the 1995 flock of Golden State prep harriers again at an outstanding level. With three of the nation's top twenty ranked prep teams nationally (Boys - Jesuit (Carmichael-SJ) #7, Girls - Yucaipa-SS #3 and Clayton Valley (Concord-NC) #4), and four of the nation's top twenty ranked individual athletes (Boys - Mike Stember (Jesuit-SJ) and Aaron Gillen (Yreka-NO), Girls - Julia Stamps (Santa Rosa-NC) and Kim Mortensen (Thousand Oaks-SS), there will be plenty of quality and depth during our full day of action here in Fresno in our eight Championship contests. After winning the State Meet here last year, our current "darling of the sport," Julia Stamps, went on in December to take the national prep title by some 30 seconds, with the eleventh grader already having destroyed a number of her course records along the way this season. It is going to be another great day for the sport!

The morning's initial contest, Girls Division II, features the state's top ranked team in the country, #3 nationally Yucaipa (SS), with the Thunderbirds seemingly on a mission since losing the title here on the sixth runner rule last Fall. Kimi Welsh, Mindy Brown, Vickie Whiteside, and Christen Ray lead a team that has proven itself among the best in State History. St. Ignatius (San Francisco-NC) has had a super Fall, with Katie Appenrodt, Laura Sandoval, and Shana Driscoll 2-3-4 in the Section Finals. Dana Hills (Dana Point-SS) has had a solid Fall, a #3 State ranking coming into this weekend, and less than a 50 second 1-5 gap in a good Section Finals run. Scripps Ranch (SD) had Emily McFarland, Kristina Stasko, and Sarah Schmidt in the top five of a tough Section Finals race, with the team totalling 45 points. Defending Champs Buchanan (Clovis-CE) peaked magnificently here last year, with a 52-57 Section win on this course over a strong Reedley (CE) team, led by Angela Ruiz and Annabel Ortiz. Leland (San Jose-CC), with strong individual Emily Allison (3rd 94 here), and University (Irvine-SS), with super frosh Allyson Marquand (17:38 in her Finals--#3 ninth grader ever from that area) and Misha Wilson, are other strong groups who can challenge for a "top three" team plaque at this level.

Kristen Koppes (Foothill, Redding-NO) has been tearing up her area this Fall. Devon Straitiff (Torrey Pines, Encinitas-SD) 5th Div II 94, Katie Nuanes (Santa Margarita, Rancho SM-SS) 7th Div III 94, Tracie Dumler (North, Bakersfield-CE), Anne Gunnison (McClatchy, Sacramento-SJ 10:54.01 3200m), and the North Coast group of Katie Hotchkiss (Mission San Jose, Fremont), Elizabeth Larmore (Monte Vista, Danville), Jennifer Ewing (Castro Valley), and Tina Bowen (San Ramon Valley, Danville) all with high Invitational placings and good Section runs.

Our Girls Division III contest has a couple of the nation's top teams. Clayton Valley (Concord-NC), under Coach Ron Silveira, has to be saluted for a willingness this Fall to travel far and wide to meet the best in the nation. During trips to Alabama and Southern California CV has climbed to the lofty position of a number four ranking in the entire nation. Heather Wallace (5th here last year), Deborah Osteen (11th), and Kelly Howlsey (19th) lead the Clayton crew that was 18:30-19:00-19:20-19:32-19:40 (96:02 team time) on a Section Finals course that seems to run fairly close to our Championship facility here. Racing home with the Championship, however, is not set in stone quite yet, as Nordhoff (Ojai-SS), traditional power under Coach Ken Reeves, peaked magnificently with 17:35-18:51-19:25-19:35-19:38 clockings and a 95:04 team time on their area Finals course. Nordhoff leads with 1994 State runner-up Elaine Canchola (94 state runner-up Div III), the nation's top frosh runner during the 1994 campaign. Clayton Valley did clock 93:42 on the same course as Nordhoff's low 95 clocking earlier in the year. It will be fun to watch these two super squads duke it out. The competition for the third team plaque will be a very competitive one. El Modena (Orange-SS) won at Stanford over Nordhoff in Clayton Valley's absence (they won Div I there), with Carondelet (Concord-NC), led by Div I 8th placer Kristen Gordon (4:54.97 1600m track), highly ranked. Temescal Canyon (Elsinore-SS), 94 runner-up here, has 94 individual 6th placer Shelby Horgan (4:57.85 1600m) and Sunny Shaffer (12th 94) leading another good team. La Jolla (SD) has steadily improved to a position of real prominence, with Santana (Santee-SD), without stars in recent weeks, a second strong team from that area. The Sac Joaquin Section has developed in this division also, with Placer (Auburn-SJ) bringing up a special young group to Varsity for championship racing and nipping strong rival Del Oro (Loomis-SJ) 36-40 in the Section Finals race. There are a ton of teams here with the ability to run under 100:00 here, with a 20 minute average for five runners on this course for schools of this size a real mark of excellence.

Defending individual Champ, Heather Garrison (Buena Park-SS) was the nation's #2 ranked frosh in 1994. Area champs Veronica Sanchez (Wasco-CE), Courtney Baird (University HS-SD) and Nicole Portley (Aragon, San Mateo-CC) will battle near the front.

The Boys Division II contest should continue the great Championship tradition of Jesuit (Carmichael-SJ), with Coach Walt Lange another powerful group led by Michael Stember. Stember, the nation's top miler with a 4:04.00 1600m best, leads a #7 ranked nationally squad, with teammate Scott Abbott second in the Section Finals. Behind Jesuit there is some great competition for the next two team plaques. De La Salle (Concord-NC) was next after Jesuit at this level in the Mt. SAC meet, with 4:15.17 1600m runner Tom Prindiville and Randy Maestretti (9:36.93 3200m) strong up front. Mission San Jose (Fremont), led by super soph Jon Stevens (4:17.30 1600m as frosh) and David Rodriguez, came within three points of De La Salle in the Section Meet. From the Southern Section come strong battle-tested groups from Yucaipa, led by Section titlist Sean Clendaniel, Katella (Anaheim), Orange, and Hemet. Leland (San Jose-CC), led by 4:13.78 1600m runner Dan Sikiric, dominated Central Coast action with a 1-2-3 sweep and 29 points. Reedley was the Central Section champs, with Torrey Pines (Encinitas-SD) improving lately as Charlie Hulsey and Tyler Mack led a big Section Finals win.

Ayub Abdusalam (Hoover, San Diego) was the San Diego champ here, with David McQuitty (Grossmont, La Mesa-SD

9:10.44 3200m) second there. Noel Nelson (Redwood, Visalia-CE) was a hundred meter Central Section winner, with Southern Section stars Irving Moreno (Riverside Poly), Mike Murray (Santa Margarita, Rancho SM- 10th Div II 94), and Ronnie Buchanan (Righetti, Santa Maria) successful Falls.

The Boys Division III has developed into a great contest between two very traditionally strong teams. Nordhoff (Ojai) was the winner here last year, with a very strong effort in the Section Finals that had them run 80:37 off of 15:34-15:56-16:14-16:26 and 16:27 efforts. Will Bernaldo, 6th 94 here (9:27.97 3200m), was the Section Champ for Nordhoff. Livermore, third here last year, had a brilliant Section Finals race, going 15:17-15:28-16:15-16:23-16:39 (80:02), with both Section Finals courses seeming to run fairly close to our Championship facility. Livermore leads with one of the nation's top prep distance runners, defending divisional champ, Mitchell Jones (4:11.94-9:09.27 in track), with Joe Smith much improved lately. It is going to be a burner up front! Familiar teams dot the front end, with 1994 State runner-up, El Modena (Orange-SS), next behind Nordhoff in the Southern Section, and Clayton Valley (fifth 1994), with 8th placer individually and 4:16.13 1600m runner Mike Wojciechowski, strong this year. Corona del Mar (Newport Beach-SS) gapped 27 seconds 1-5 in its qualifying race, with St. Francis (La Canada-SS) two of the division's top individuals in Kevin Koeper (9th 94 Div III and 9:28.95 3200m) and Andy Van Orden. Central Coast representatives St. Ignatius (San Francisco), with area champ Paul Wellman, and St. Francis (Mountain View), led by Mike Cheung, can compete for a team plaque here.

Bolota Asmeron (McAteer, San Francisco) will be tough individually, with Bryan Green (Littlerock-SS) capable of well under 16:00 here.

The Girls Division IV contest had evolved into another great team contest with two of the best squads in State history at this level battling. Louisville (Woodland Hills-SS) has rolled through the season dominating all at this level, including a best ever Division IV enrollment size team time of 97:12 at the Mt. SAC course when they moved up and won the Div III Sweepstakes event there. The Royals had 29 points in their Section Finals run off 18:31-19:21-19:33-20:09-20:31 efforts that totalled (98:05) 1-5 for the squad. Shalynn Fullove (5th Div IV 94 5:10.75) and Ashley Caro lead Louisville. Up north a group from University (San Francisco-NC) has quietly been developing, with section champ Linden Bader heading 19:10-19:45-19:49-20:12-20:20 efforts that totalled 99:16 on a course that runs close to here and the Louisville Section finals facility. Louisville and University could leave today as the two best Division IV squads in State history!

Morro Bay (SS) has a great tradition (5th 94, 3rd 93), with frosh Samantha Michel and Brittany App leading another strong Pirate team. Orange Lutheran (SS), with Kristin Groncy having a fine Fall up-front, can challenge for the third plaque. West Valley (Cottonwood-No) is another with great tradition (3rd 1994 Div IV) and some fine fall multi-team efforts. Central section squads Taft, led by Tracy Bowling, and McFarland, with Christina Sanchez and Laura Davis under 20:00 here, are peaking strongly. Filtridge Sacred-Heart (La Canada-SS), sixth here last year, has 1994 4th placer Melissa MacPherson running strongly this Fall.

Fine all-around athlete, Sarabeth Schweitzer (Marysville-SJ), Lindsay Buwaida (Laguna Beach-SS), Courtney Davidson (Redwood Christian-CC), Sarah Halles (Ursuline, Santa Rosa-NC), Heather Gibson (Piedmont-NC), Jen Pong (Terra Linda, San Rafael-NC 7th place 1994), and Marissa Hurwitz (Bishops, La Jolla-10th place 94), will battle for individual awards.

The Girls Division I is led by the Western US's #7 ranked squad in Canyon (Canyon Country-SS). Lauren Fleshman, Julie Harris, and Kelly Stigle lead the Cowboy crew that was 96:24 in taking the Southern Section Championships. The San Diego section provides powerhouses Orange Glen (Escondido), led by Cara Rumble, and Vista, with Sonia Rodriguez (20th 94), both highly rated all Fall. Other Southern Section squads Los Alamitos, led by Amber Pierce, Ayala, with fine soph Jennifer Burris, and Irvine, with 94 third place individual Jessica Corbin, are all very solid and successful this Fall. The Central section had Clovis and Clovis West (Fresno) showing a fine peak in their area Finals. Lowell (San Francisco) was tenth last year with Oasi Lucero leading another good crew.

Julia Stamps (Santa Rosa-NC) and Kim Mortensen (Thousand Oaks-SS) will go at it once again individually. Stamps set a Course Record here last year at 16:45 before winning the national prep title in the sport, with her usual series of stunning efforts this Fall, capped by Course Records along the way at the popular Stanford University and Mt. San Antonio College courses. Mortensen has improved magnificently, running within twenty-two and nineteen seconds of Stamps in their two races this Fall. Kim is the #2 all-time prep on the challenging Mt. SAC course, with solid efforts the last two weekends. Many feel this division, in Stamps and Mortensen, has the two top female cross-country runners in the nation. Andrea Neipp (Highland, Palmdale-SS), Angle Winkler (Fountain Valley-SS), Rachae McCauley (Canyon Springs, Moreno Valley-SS), Stephanie McCarty (Madera-CE), Deborah Blaisch (Silver Creek, San Jose-CC), and Jen Schindler (Ponderosa, Shingle Springs-SJ) are others who have run very quick this season.

The Boys Division IV race has two teams, McFarland (CE) and Morro Bay (SS) who come back year after year at a frighteningly high level for the size of their student bodies. Last year it was a 62-62 tie with the sixth runner sorting it out for a McFarland win. Despite losing individual State Champ Galvin Gonzalez, Coach Jim White's McFarland crew has cranked it up a notch this Fall, often stepping up all the way to the Large Schools division in big invitationals and walking away with team wins with a group that is the state's best ever Division IV squad. Jose Lopez and Gerardo Soto lead the 1995 power from the Central Section. Morro Bay (SS) is back, as usual, with soph Isalah Festa (9:29.36 3200m as frosh last spring) undefeated this season, with the fastest time in the entire Southern Section in last week's Championships. Rico Gomez and T.W. Burchmore back up Festa strongly, with the battle here always a great one between Morro and McFarland. Piedmont (NC), fourth here in 1994, with Carl Moran and Keith Primble placing high, put together a strong Section Finals effort. Southern Section squads Fillmore, with Efrain Garcia some strong races this Fall, Oak Park, and Filtridge Prep (La Canada), seventh here in 1994, will be tough. Palma (Salinas-CC), with Aaron Thornton on top, and York School (Monterey-CC), led by Elijah Bilotta, won qualifying spots in a competitive Central Coast area. Claremont (SD) took a ranked Coronado (SD) crew in their Finals 42-43, with West Valley

(Cottonwood) a good pack from the North.

Individually, Aaron Gillen (Yreka-NO), had the fastest time of the day in his big trip south to Mt. SAC, with a series of races against the best in Oregon from his far north home base continuing his steady improvement. Section rival Aaron Harris (Lassen, Susanville) was eleventh last Fall Div II and is currently very hot! Micah Fuson (Taft-CE) and Kenny Rhoan (Sierra, Tollhouse-CE), Joshua Schwletzer (Marysville-SJ), and Steve Mullen (La Salle, Pasadena-SS) were strong individuals this Fall. Holtville's (SD) Miguel Ramirez was an impressive local winner.

The Boys Division I race will be very, very interesting. A balanced Nevada Union (Grass Valley-SJ) pack proved itself early by beating the State's best at this level during midseason, with Del Campo (Fair Oaks-SJ), led by Dave Crass and Matt Moore, finally healthy, only five points behind in the Section Finals. Bellarmine (San Jose-CC) has shown fine potential during the season, with Madera (CE) and a much-improved Clovis (CE) squad competitive with the state's top group. From the Southern Section, Peninsula, led by Ryan Deane (25th 94), Santa Ana, with a 30 second 1-5 gap, Hoover (Glendale), led by David Lopez, and Ayala (Chino Hills), all will be competitive. Poway (SD) and an improving Chula Vista (SD) group, led by Adrian Ramirez are also strong from the South, with Belmont (Los Angeles) the Champ from that area. Amazingly, when comparing Section Final courses and times it appears that all of the above mentioned Div I squads were within a minute and a half when team member 1-5 times were added up. The Boys Division I may be tougher to call than any division in State history. A return to health by Nevada Union may make them the slight favorite, but the first three team plaques will be sorted out somewhere between fortieth and eightieth place by those hard working late scorers for teams that makes this the greatest of all sports. Look for a record high point total for the winning team in an event that should drive Announcer Bob Womack right off his pick-up truck near the end!

Larry Henderson (Mira Mesa-SD 4:09.63 1600m) has been very strong, with Matt Wickersham (Mater Dei, Santa Ana-SS) a surprise Southern Section winner, with Todd Disney (Thousand Oaks-SS), and Matt Brown (Corona-SS) strong from there. Juan Chavira (Hanford-CE), Eduardo Sanchez (Garfield, LA-LA), and Enrique Torres (Silver Creek, San Jose-CC) were strong Section Champions recently.