

# 1999 California State Cross Country Meet

by Doug Speck

(Thanks to Richard Gonzalez for assistance with statistics.)

The 1999 state cross country was another tremendously exciting close to the Golden State harrier campaign, with lots of thrills and a few upsets of the form charts along the way. The ability of young people to pound the three mile/five thousand meter distance with quality performances week after week is truly amazing. Although some found it tough to go to the well after a couple of straight weeks of top flight performances, there was some super running as the best from ten sections came together. By the end of the day, California's top nationally ranked teams, Don Lugo (Chino) boys, and San Lorenzo Valley (Felton) girls, emerged with the best team times. Some good individual racing bodes well for strong showings at the Western regionals and the Foot Locker nationals in December.

## Girls' Division II

The day started with girls' Division II action and featuring the athlete many think is the best in the country, Sara Bei (Montgomery, Santa Rosa). After posting a third place finish at last year's Foot Locker nationals (behind Erin Sullivan and runner-up Lauren Fleshman who are leading Stanford in the NCAA's), Sara has had a great fall season.

The team contest saw Foothill (Santa Ana), a program jerked up by the bootstraps over the last year by coach Jeff Farr, emerging early in the season with a national top twenty-five ranking as well as the top Division II ranking statewide, the favorite over good teams from Santa Margarita, Brea, Antioch, and Vacaville. Santa Margarita and Brea were coming on strong, with Antioch and Vacaville developing nicely in their areas. Some good individuals would try to keep Queen Sara company up front.

The day dawned quite chilly, with overcast skies that later gave way to sunny and pleasant conditions. Sara Bei broke on top, coming by the mile—the first time in public view—at 5:23. The team race seemed quite tight, with Foothill, Santa Margarita and Antioch looking good in the early running. Janie Nolan, who runs a bit like Gerry Lindgren used



Flintridge Prep, 1999 State Div. V Champion. Coach Ingrid Herskind (far left, back row) is the only woman to lead a boys' team to state title.

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to with kind of a loose forearm-driven arm action, settled into second some 21 seconds behind Sara at 11:51 with a mile to go in the race. The Foothill crew seemed to hold on to a narrow lead as the event came into the finish, with the final score Foothill 92, Santa Margarita 95, Antioch 111. Bei took the individual honors in 17:25.

After the event Sara was talkative, stating that it was "cold out there, and I kind of tightened up during the race because of that. I was out at the mile at a perfect pace and had a good rhythm, but the last mile was not as fast as I wanted." She said, "I really feel good going into the next couple of weeks for Foot Locker."

Today Sara joined Deena Drossin (Agoura) as the only girl ever to win three state titles, with the possibility of securing a fourth title next fall. With constant talk this year of her attempts to time her seasonal peaks more carefully, the next couple of weekends could be interesting. Sara was four seconds off the Mt. SAC course record last year (16:59) on the way to her Western Regional win there.

Felicia Guilford (New Mexico), a very hot Great All-American Cross Country Classic winner in September, and Sara Gorton, the Arizonan who was the Junior national 3000 meter champ

last spring after not making the Foot Locker Nationals last year—among others—will be ready to challenge Sara in Orlando.

## Girls' Division III

Coach Rob Collins, formerly the mentor of a fine program in Sandy, Ore., had relocated to the Felton, Calif. area and, luckily for the running world, wandered down the local high school to do a bit of running with the team. His first-year project was Alejandra Barrientos, who went from the 2:30's as a half-miler to a super fall cross country season, then a 4:45.02 1600m win at state, followed by the national junior 1500 meter title. Coach Collins indicated he had some good girls moving up from the middle school, including Alejandra's sister, with some others who could develop.

In probably the best ever single year improvement in California high school team history, coach Collins and his San Lorenzo Valley squad were 10-12 minutes better as a team time top five group! With Alejandra's leadership, they demonstrated an impressive willingness to get out after it in each of their big races, posting impressive wins at Stanford and Mt. SAC against some good competition. They were ranked inside the nation's top

ten and were a big favorite here. Granada (Livermore) was super from the North Coast, with South Hills a big southern winner over defending champs La Canada, with Foothill (Redding) a fine group from the North.

Jenny Aldridge (Maria Carrillo, Santa Rosa) was reported the early leader, with the pack having Alejandra Barrientos slightly ahead as they came past spectators near the mile. San Lorenzo Valley, in typical style, had thrown down the gauntlet, with all of their scorers in the top twenty-five. The dark-clad Granada team was also out quickly. San Lorenzo Valley ran tough the entire way, with Alejandra Barrientos winning comfortably at 17:37. Lauren Gustafson (Mills) moved up to second at 18:00, ahead of Aldridge (18:13).

Raquel Barrientos backed up her sister with second in the team scoring at fourth overall at 18:45, with coach Collins' winning crew scoring 43 points. Second-place Granada finished out a super year with 66 points, while Foothill (Redding) surprising the southerners with a good race and 99 points to finish in third. Without seniors in their top six, San Lorenzo Valley posted the top team time of the day in all divisions.

Alejandra Barrientos felt that she had run a good race and she knew that Jenny Aldridge would be tough competition. The winner stated that she "threw in a move at the base of the hill on the course," that Aldridge did not answer and that was where she broke free. She had some cramping in her back as the race went along, but tried to keep it out of her mind. Her goal today was 17:00, but she was happy with the win. Barrientos said she is really looking forward to next week to try to qualify for the Foot Locker Nationals. With an October win over two-time Nationals qualifier Abby Miller (Nevada) on the tough Mt. SAC course, the SLV flash will be tough to keep off the team.

#### **Boys' Division II**

Eureka had emerged at the North Coast Section Meet with a super-tight gap and 19 points! Santiago (Garden Grove) had their top three in the 15:40's on the tough Mt. SAC course in the south, with La Jolla strong from San Diego. Talented Augie Escobar (Villa Park), an 8:56 3200m runner in track, was the favorite, with early season burner Matt McInvale (Ramona) held back lately with injury.

Puneet Mahan (Norwalk) had pushed Escobar the last two weekends. Eureka, with an interesting white, green and red outfit would be easy to spot in the race!

Stuart Eastman (Placer, Auburn), green-haired to match his school colors, raced along slightly ahead of Escobar early in the running. Eureka looked very strong right from the start with all of their scorers inside the top thirty-five when the field came by the spectators at the mile mark. When the field next came into view at a bit past two miles, it was a pack of Eastman, Escobar and Girmay Guangul of Santa Clara, with Eureka still looking very strong. Santiago had its top three in good position, but Eureka's scorers at that point had the event swamped!

The very talented Escobar powered to the win at 15:27, with Eastman second (15:29) and Gualgul third (15:32). The very visible Eureka squad poured in, with its top five inside of the top thirty-five undisplaced finishers, with its fifth runner in before Santiago's fourth, seemly assuring victory. It turned out to be a 56-119 win for Eureka.

Lehrin Morey, number two today for Eureka, spoke for the team, saying, "Individually, I was not happy with my race, but I am very happy for the team today. I was gone for the first couple of weeks of the season, and when I returned I jumped right in and we were racing strong. This is the first ever state title for Eureka High School in any sport!"

Coach Robert Bode indicated that it was the camaraderie between team members and the love that developed in the group as they built towards the end of the season that helped them achieve their ultimate success.

#### **Boys' Division III**

The boys' Division III contest had a strong group with some impressive section finals peaks a week or so back. South Hills had won over rival Don Bosco Tech in the south with a super team time in the 79:30's at Mt. SAC. Los Gatos looked very strong with a seemingly controlled CCS win, while Granada nipped a strong Redwood (Larkspur) team in the NCS. A good group of individuals from the leading teams would be joined by Eric Chavez (St. Francis, Mountain View) up front.

Right from the start, it was Don Bosco Tech out strong and looking determined. Los Gatos also seemed tough early on, with South Hills and leader Jesse

Hodges (15:20 at Mt. SAC to win the southern section) back a bit. South El Monte's Daniel Rojas and Matt Sartor (Enterprise, Redding) battled with Eric Chavez up front through two miles. The tough Rojas, who—with the strong competition in his area—was not used to winning big races, was toughest over the final half-mile to win over Matt Sartor 15:45-15:47, with Chavez finishing tenth. Don Bosco was tough through the finish, with Granada having three in before the southerner's second runner (Granada 2-4-9 displaced scoring), but Bosco's 35-second 1-5 gap was impossible to handle this day, as they won 75 to 90 over Granada. South Hills was third at 106, with Los Gatos in fourth with 116.

#### **Girls' Division IV**

This division was a showdown between two of the state's better programs, Corona del Mar (Newport Beach) and Nordhoff (Ojai). Coaches Bill Sumner (CdM) and Ken Reeves (Nordhoff) have rich traditions on both the boys' and girls' sides, with Corona del Mar the loser here (by one point) to Nordhoff at this level last year. Corona del Mar had really come out charging in 1999, with huge wins all season long against top competition. Nordhoff is known for a steady build and frightening peaks the last couple of weeks of the season, so anything was possible. Bridget Duffy, who led St. Mary's (Berkeley) to a section win over a strong Campolindo (Moraga) team, had a super section meet run, with fine frosh Christina Jimenez of new school Granite Hills (Apple Valley), demonstrating a determined and successful racing style.

Nordhoff warmed up in blue uniforms, then switched to black just before the start, while Corona del Mar raced in their traditional black uniforms with a white CdM across the front. CdM was out quickly, definitely ahead of Nordhoff through the mile, where John Ortega of the LA TIMES had it 61-116 CdM with no displacement. Christina Jimenez, Bridget Duffy and San Dieguito Academy star Jenna Timinsky rolled along out front, with Rae Stumbough of Nordhoff not far behind. Through two miles, Nordhoff crept closer, with CdM star Liz Morse slowly fading back from her usual position among the lead runners.

Nordhoff continued to move, with Rae Stumbough eventually racing away to

the win 18:25-18:35 over Bridget Duffy, but Corona del Mar did hang together strongly enough to win, 42-55.

Coach Bill Sumner, who has coached for eighteen years, the last eight with both the boys and girls at Corona del Mar, pointed to his team's great depth as the reason for their success. Nine girls on the team have run under 19:38 at Mt. SAC, with frosh Jennifer Long stepping up today with a fourth place position on the team. Liz Morse had started out a bit quick on this day but the rest of the team stepped up, just as they had all year. Each big race was approached a bit differently this season, with the squad taking aim at the best squad in their different big races. They set out to beat teams like San Lorenzo Valley and Woodbridge when they ran against them, a different approach than he had tried with previous squads.

Team leader Liz Morse was gracious on a tough day. Feeling responsibility as the squad's leader in almost all their big races, she stated, "This was one of those 'off' days. But the team came along and picked it up so nicely. Frosh Jennifer Long has only run three varsity races and she was our fourth runner! This could not have been a better senior year. We accomplished all of our goals. We were ranked nationally and won the section and state championships. Remember, we lost this meet by one point last year."

It might have been a good experience for the team when a sick Morse had to drop out at the Mt. SAC Invitational, with Katie Quinlan taking over and leading the team's charge there also.

#### Boys' Division V

The boys' Division V contest featured last year's champs Flintridge Prep and coach Ingrid Herskind, going for two in a row. Calvary Chapel (Downey), Calvin Christian (Escondido) and the great University (San Francisco) teams threatened. Flintridge runs with a disciplined pack approach, leaving the front end to others. Tom Kubler (Viewpoint, Calabasas), a 9:17 3200m runner, generally shakes up that front end of the races at this level, with a sub-15:20 race at Mt. SAC during section action there! Frosh Tim Nelson (Liberty Christian, Redding) had won the northern section overall race, with soph Henry Hagenbuch (say it *Hagenbush*) of Cate in Carpinteria impressing with a mid-15:30's at Mt.



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SAC down south!

Kubler was off to the races again, with the tall, purposeful striding star spreading things out early on. After the first mile, Tim Nelson led the second pack, with Flintridge Prep spread out a bit but appearing ahead of others, with Calvary Chapel in an easily viewable maroon, and no one else appearing strong as a group. University (SF) was strong up front, with Sean Drake and Ben Good in the top dozen. As usual, Kubler raced away from everyone, here a 15:51 winner. Flintridge moved up steadily, with their pack four in front of anyone else's third, on their way to a 69-100-108 win over Calvary Chapel and University. Flintridge returns four for next year while both Calvary and University return six.

#### Girls' Division I

Some really great running took place here. There were some great teams, led by Woodbridge (Irvine) who had run an amazing time in the 93:30's at the southern section meet at Mt. SAC, Rancho Bernardo who destroyed teams in San Diego and Peninsula also very strong. Anita Siraki had joined an elite group of four (with Julia Stamps, Kristen Gordon and Sara Bei) by breaking 17:00 in the southern section finals. Here there were runners who would keep her effort honest.

Rancho Bernardo has a dynamite foursome in Julie Manson, Allison Hall, Kaleena Yee and Jamie Doyle, with discus thrower (and section placer) Mikaelyn Austin the team's fifth runner. Peninsula was continuing a fine peak that had it average a tad over 19:00 at Mt. SAC a

week ago, so it would be a race.

A lead pack of Heather Hanson (Madera soph), Anita Siraki, Julie Allen (Fountain Valley) and Latesha Jones (Rialto) took off early. Rancho Bernardo had four in front of Woodbridge's second runner in the early going, so it certainly was a race! With Siraki eventually breaking away from the determined Allen to win 17:35-17:42, eyes were on the team contest.

Julie Manson (7th overall) and Allison Hall (8th) were never caught by anyone from Woodbridge, with the San Diego power three in before Woodbridge's second runner. Woodbridge had its five runners inside the top forty of the race, with Rancho Bernardo's fourth, Jamie Doyle, in at 27th. Through four, the displaced total would be Rancho Bernardo 22 and Woodbridge 35, with Erin Kredel's 21st for Woodbridge's fifth (runner's displaced) taking Woodbridge to a 56-90 win when Mikaelyn Austin emerged 68th after displacement for RB's number five. Peninsula was 115 in third, with the top three here worthy of ranking among the top fifty in the nation.

Coach George Varvas indicated later that he knew his squad was in trouble early when he saw four Rancho Bernardo athletes in front of his second runner. He had faith in the strength of his team members and hoped they could rebound, which they all did. When asked why this team developed so very specially during the season, he replied, "This is the fourth year for a couple of the leaders of this team. They now know what cross country is all about. They are motivated and very

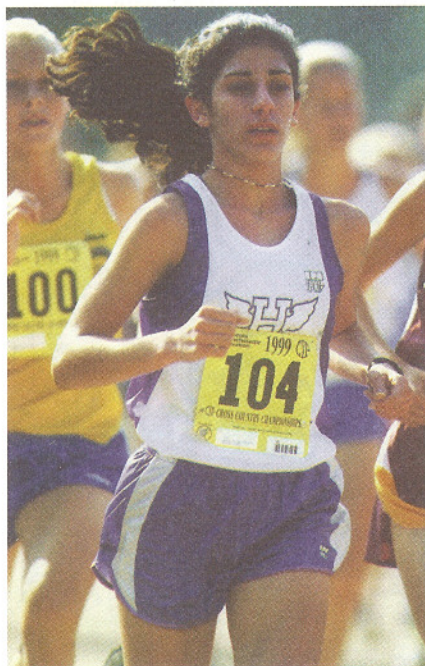
hard workers. This is the first year that when I called a workout everyone was there and they would do whatever I asked of them. This team was so very close, a truly special group."

#### Boys Division IV

The boys' Division IV had strong squads from all corners of the state. McFarland had been strong all season, with an 81:05 on this course the week previous in the central section Grand Master's meet. Nordhoff and Oak Park had dogfights down south, with both steadily developing into teams that could challenge for the title. Central Valley (Shasta) and St. Augustine (San Diego) also were good groups, with Riverbank out of the Sac Joaquin section slowly building to a fine peak in their section finals, determined to make up for end-of-season difficulties last year.

Ryan Hall of Big Bear had strengthened himself on Large Schools competition most of the fall, racing under 15:00 during southern section action at Mt. SAC, with some other good athletes in the field.

McFarland, in mostly white uniforms trimmed with red, knows this course like the back of their hands. Behind leader Andres Gomez, they were going after their seventh state title, a state record, for coach Jim White. (Nordhoff also was gunning for their seventh title for coach Ken Reeves). McFarland travels statewide to face the best and they just were not to be denied this day.



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Up front, Ryan Hall edged away from surprising Jesse McLeod (Lassen, Susanville) to win 15:24-15:31, with Mark Nevers (Oak Park) first of the favored teams in at third in 15:55. Roberto Contreras was eighth overall for Nordhoff, with Andres Gomez starting the McFarland charge at 10th (16:07). McFarland ended the suspense with its top four in before the other top teams' number three runner, with Francisco Gonzalez, 25th after displacement, also the top number five runner. McFarland totaled 68, with Nordhoff 102, Riverbank a pleasant 108 for the third plaque, with Oak Park 123 in fourth.

Riverbank had stayed close to home this fall, with one good CCS Invite run over a short course, so they were a bit tough to gauge. After last year, when they had a number ranking early on and then had a ton of things go wrong, it was nice to see them on the award stand this time around, even though if a fourth place plaque was ever deserved for a great season, it was Kevin Smith's Oak Park crew.

#### Girls' Division V

Wow! Another great contest between a number of super programs. University (San Francisco) had won three consecutive state titles and, behind strong team leader Aliza Cohen, they were primed for a fourth. Chadwick, Northwood and comer Maranatha were hot down south, with Chadwick led by strong Kriston Cohoon and Maranatha by undefeated frosh Laura Meyers. Clara Horowitz of Head Royce (NCS) was spoken of highly from her area on the strength of her end-of-season section running. Alle Porter (Dunsmuir) had been the overall champ of the northern section.

The strong trio of Horowitz, Meyers and Cohen led the race, with the contest very, very close among the top teams. Laura Meyers started to fade from the top group after the two mile and eventually dropped out. She needed hospitalization for dehydration, although she was soon okay. Horowitz, a soph, raced away to an 18:26 win over Cohen's 18:38, with Cohoon 18:50 on the team end in third.

Wow, what a contest as the squads raced for the tape! Through three, it was Chadwick 16, University 21 and Northwood 27. After four, it was Chadwick 31, University 38 and Northwood 46. Northwood had the first fifth runner making their total 66, with

University's final scorer next posting a 59-point team tally, with Chadwick the next scorer in to total 56 and the win! These are some super teams at this level! With Laura Meyers finishing up near the front Maranatha would have been a part of that great team contest. The folks from these small schools can really run.

#### Boys' Division I

They saved the best for last on the boys' side, with Don Lugo (Chino Hills) dynamite lately. Their southern section run averaged in the 15:30's on that tough course, with a respectable job here tough to catch. It was a great year in the sport at this level, with a number of teams at or under 80:00 on tough courses like this one and Mt. SAC along the way. Any of about six teams could finish in second and it would not be much of a surprise.

It was sad that this division was the victim of the most off-handed and negative situation that this author has ever seen in the sport of high school cross country. After a number of ties in San Diego at the large schools level (four through the section meet involving highly ranked Mt. Carmel, Poway and Vista), questions came up over a tie in the section finals that had Vista lose out on one of the two spots to the state meet on the basis of the sixth-runner rule.

It turned out that the state advisory committee on the sport had suggested taking ties to the state meet, since the starting line at Fresno was never full. The motion was passed unanimously by that committee, with state entries official Dennis DeWitt of Madera stating he has a paper from then-state official Margaret Davis from two years ago stating that the meet would accept all schools that tie for the final spot to go to state. In fact, two such schools competed last year, DeWitt stated. One coach indicated that the ruling did reach the paperwork for his section meet a year ago.

Anyway, officials involved with the CIF and Fresno State CC meet first ruled that Vista would not be allowed to compete, then ruled it was okay (resulting in parents driving five hours on Friday with uniforms), only to be told that no, they could not run. Then the team was allowed at the starting line, but pulled off fifteen seconds before the race started! We have never observed a stranger example of the inability of people to make a decision.

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