

## 5th Annual Jackie Henderson Memorial Meet Preview by Coach Gustavo Ibarra

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**Jackie Henderson (1989-2017)**

We are pleased to host the [5th Annual Jackie Henderson Memorial Cross Country Invitational](#) on **Saturday, September 7th, 2024 at North Monterey County High School** in Castroville, CA. The meet started back in 2018 with a modest 13 teams and has now exploded in size to over 50 teams in 2024! The event continues to honor *Jackie Henderson* who was an assistant cross country and track coach at North Monterey County who was tragically hit by a car while out on a run in the summer of 2017. The course is 3 miles and features a start and loops on flat grass, a moderately hilly section on dirt trails, and intermediate loops with an exciting finish in a beautiful track and field stadium. It has a mix of everything with great viewing and seating in the stadium and race play-by-play announcing and an awards stand. Most of our teams are from the Central Coast Section with some top contenders making a longer trip! The meet kicks off with a free [3 mile open race](#) (8:00 am) to honor Jackie allowing everyone to lace them up. Then the [middle schoolers](#) (6th-8th grades) are invited to show up for a free/open 2 mile (8:30 am). Finally, the traditional Frosh/Soph (9:00 Girls, 9:30 Boys), Junior Varsity (10:00 Girls, 10:30 Boys), and Varsity (11:00 Girls, 11:30 Boys) 3 mile [high school](#) races for each gender will highlight the meet on the fast layout. **The 2023 meet delivered as expected with new course records for boys AND girls individually AND as teams! For 2024, we see 3 out of those 4 records in jeopardy once again with a cast of who's who's clashing here early on!**

Last year the varsity girls team race delivered as expected and we see that again this year! We have heavy meet favorites **St. Francis (Mountain View)**, the defending champions, now with course experience, poised to take a shot at the course record! They stormed the course last year in their debut here and pulled off a close 35-39 win over Whitney. Although, [Whitney got the team-time record \(90:04\) in the process and now St. Francis takes aim at that record!](#) To get the record they will need to AVERAGE 18:00 for their top 5 girls, a tall, but doable, task! The defending CCS champs in D2 return a fabulous line-up which helped them to consecutive podium finishes (3rd) at the state meet in their uber competitive division. They ended 2023 as the 9th best team in all of California and look to climb that elite ladder this year. Whitney, who has sparkled at this meet, can't make it this year, so it will be up to **Los Gatos**, who make their return to this meet, to pose any challenge. They placed 3rd at CCS in D2 and 8th at state and were the 20th best team overall in California in 2023! **Evergreen Valley** joins the meet for the first time and is poised for a top 3 finish. They are the defending CCS Champs in D1! All three of our pre-meet favorites return 6 of their scoring 7 from 2023! **Scotts Valley**, 2nd in CCS D4, leads other challengers with plenty of Jackie Henderson experience with a nice win and course record back in 2022. **Willow Glen, Cupertino, Carmel, St. Ignatius, Alisal, Prospect, Woodcreek**, and host **North Monterey County**, will lead a slew of teams hoping to make the top 10. Teams will need to run sub 100:47 team time to make our [top 10 all-time](#). 3-4 teams have a shot to do that here.

Individually, Ashlyn Boothby (Scotts Valley), our generational talent and her [16:48 course record](#) from last year, has graduated, thus opening the door for a new individual winner! Ashlyn's record may be the safe one here but like in this year's Olympics, it's all about the gold medal! **Caitlin Gilley (12-St. Francis)** comes in as a very slight favorite for the title but will have 4-5 very capable challengers on her heels for the win including her own teammates! Caitlin sparkled in 2023 with a

18:17 CCS run and followed that up with a 18:20 state run. **Kylie Hoornaert (12-Prospect)** returns after a brilliant track season where she won CCS in the 800 (2:08) and went on to place 7th at state! She also ran a splendid 4:51 mile and 10:42 2 mile. With those credentials she could take the win. **Ava Declève (11-Scotts Valley)** is a meet veteran, placing 3rd last year, and blitzed a :56 for 400 meters! If it's close at the end, she could close fast for the win. **Shea Elmore (12-Los Gatos)** will be trying to hold off CCS freshman of the year **Nora Carino (10-Evergreen Valley)** and her teammate **Sivani Kaliki (10) St. Francis'** chase pack will be led by **Lauren Draper (11)** and **Sabrina Zanetto (12)**, who are some of our individual favorites, along with **Katie Mullane (11)** and **Charlie Hofstetter (11)**. Others looking to challenge for top 10 medals include **Lola Herning (12-Willow Glen)**, **Lena Llamas (11-Buhach Colony)**, **Katelynn Ruiz (12-Watsonville)**, **Ava Ghio (12-Carmel)**, **Nimeesha Kolari (11-Cupertino)**, **Heidi Green (12-Santa Cruz)**, and **Los Gatos** teammates **Taylor Chesarek (12)**, **Tatum Pyle (12)**, and **Sarina Salzer (12)**. **Girls will need to run under 18:04 to crack our top 10 all-time**. We could see up to 7-8 girls under that mark!! This race is LOADED!

The varsity boys race will feature three elite CCS teams facing off early with a very good SJS team making the trip. West Catholic League foes **St. Francis (Mountain View)** and **St. Ignatius** will be close and will be trying to hold off **Los Gatos** while **Woodcreek** comes into town trying to spoil the CCS party. St Francis returns 3 from a CCS D2 title team. They have the 2nd fastest team-time ever on this course from last year (79:39) and hope to take a shot at the [team time course record by Whitney of 79:06](#). St. Ignatius counters with 5 returnees from a CCS D3 title team. Los Gatos returns the most with 6 guys back led by a star up-front making them the most dangerous for an upset win. Woodcreek returns their top 5 and could climb the SJS rankings as the year progresses. **Willow Glen** returns a good crew and **Monte Vista Christian** has been quietly putting together a nice team. They along with **Aptos** should be in the hunt for a top 5 finish. Local traditional powers **Alisal, Scotts Valley, King City**, and **Santa Cruz**, along with **Leland** and **Marina** round out the top contenders. Teams will need to run 83:10 or faster team time to make our [top 10 all time list](#). We see 4-6 teams capable of that today.

Individually, **Eli Fitchen-Young (12-Santa Cruz)** set the course on fire two years back running a mind-blowing 14:47 course record and then followed that up last year taking one second off his own time to the now standing [14:46 course record!](#) He took it out in 4:33 for the first mile last year and hit 2 miles in 9:37. Now he comes back as a senior hoping to take more than a second off his own record! If we can get the crowd behind him we may see something truly special. He is the defending CCS D4 champ and blazed a 14:49 at the state meet over 5,000 meters last season. He then blitzed an 8:57 3200 in track. He's ready! But, he will have company this year from TWO other meet favorites! **Aydon Stefanopoulos (12-Los Gatos)** has all the credentials to spoil the three-peat course record attempt. He is the defending state champ in D2 with a fine 14:58 after ripping a 14:23 3 mile at the Woodbridge Invite last year. This is a 3 mile course as well with some slight hills so we will see how he does here. Our last pre-meet favorite is **Carson Hedlund (12-Pioneer)**. He is the defending CCS champ in D3 and has the speed to win with 1:54 800 and 4:07 1600 credentials! Buckle up folks for this three-headed monster! All three could dip under the old course record if the weather cooperates. Others hoping to hang on for the fast ride include our runner-up from last year **Joshua Guzman (12-Gilroy)**, along with **Trey Wright (12-St. Ignatius)**, **Dylan Frake (12-Cupertino)**, **Dominic McMahon (12-Santa Clara)**, **Mack Aldi (12-Carmel)**, **David Winston (12-Woodcreek)**, **Hayden Kieslich (11-Willow Glen)**, **Sam Hansen (10-Aptos)**, **Ben Klarich (12-Los Gatos)**, **Gustavo Perez (12-Alisal)**, **Aaron Weiss (11-Scotts Valley)**, **John Hollister (12-St. Ignatius)**, **Fabian Serrano (11-Greenfield)**, and **St. Francis** teammates **Justin Fann (12)**, **Riley Clark (12)**, and **Charles O'Brien (12)**. **Boys will need to go sub 15:25 to get into the all-time top 10**. We could see 7-8 guys doing that today!

Thank you to the schools who have joined us as we honor Jackie and we hope you enjoy the meet!  
Visit the meet website at: <https://sites.google.com/view/hendersonmemorialcc/home?authuser=0>