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## Lamorinda cross country well represented at championship meet, led by state champion Campo girls

By Jon Kingdon



Campolindo girls and boys cross country teams, top row, from left: Coach Chuck Woodridge, Quinn Guthrie, Makena Weberski, Daisy Penney, Shea Volkmer, Angeni Lieben, Ellie Buckley, Caroline McCool, Sloane Pullen, Alejandro Canales, Coach Andy Lindquist; bottom row: Coach Jeff Thomas, Alex Lodewick, Rhys Pullen, Sam Smith, Conner McGhee, Blake Webster, Finn Jordan, Maxon Cook, Coach Megan Gentes Photo provided

place Del Oro whose final score was 120. Quinn Guthrie and Angeni Lieben were the final two runners for the Cougars.

Though conditions were ideal in Clovis, Campolindo had to overcome unexpected problems in the race. Senior Angeni Lieben, who was the fourth fastest runner for Campolindo at NorCal, seemed to have her legs and body give out on her, refusing to quit and finishing far back in the pack but earning the respect of her teammates. "Angeni's mental toughness showed what a trooper she is by insisting on finishing the race," Buckley said.

Makena Weberski also had difficulties when she fell early in the race but got up quickly, finishing the race with bloody knees.

The course was one that the team was familiar with, having run at the Rough Rider Invitational earlier in the year. "Knowing the course helped us strategize our race," Buckley said. "We knew to get out hard because the race funnels quickly in the beginning and we did not want to get caught behind a herd of runners and we were able to keep our position."

Buckley, Lieben, Guthrie and McCool took on the leadership role for the team. "We had an attitude that we wanted to do it together and not have any bad energy or vibes toward each other," Buckley said, "We let the younger girls know that if they had any questions or doubts, they could come to us."

It all paid off in the end, Buckley said: "It was fun just being extremely exhausted after the race, but it was a relief and really nice being with all of the girls, parents and coaches that supported us, having that moment."

Finishing in second with a score of 70, the boys team only trailed West Torrance whose combined score was 57. The five leading runners for Campolindo were Rhys Pullen (5), Alexander Lodewick (12), Blake Webster (13), Connor McGhee (19) and Finn Jordan (21). Pullen's average mile time for the race was 4:58.5. Lodewick just edged out Webster by 0.6 seconds with a time of 15:53.2.

Despite the second-place finish, Lodewick took great pride in the team's performance. "All of our runners put out a great performance," Lodewick said. "We wanted to start out the first mile hard, push the second mile and see what we had left at the end. Blake really had an inspired race. He dropped 10 seconds from when we ran on this course earlier in the year. He really brought it and really pushed me to go faster during

It's no small feat to qualify to run in the state championship cross country meet which was held in Clovis, California. The teams need to finish in the top three at the NorCal Tournament. The Campolindo boys and girls easily qualified by winning their divisions. The Miramonte girls won their division as well and the Acalanes girls team finished in third place and were led by Olivia Williams with a time of 16:50.2, breaking the meet record and finishing ahead of her nearest opponent by 18.4 seconds. The boys team finished in fourth, just missing qualifying but Tyler Hunt finished in fifth which allowed him to run as an individual the next week.

After winning the state meet in 2019, due to the coronavirus the Campolindo girls had to wait 759 days to repeat as the state champions. "I'm really grateful that we were able to compete in the first place, but it was frustrating to have it delayed for so long," said junior Ellie Buckley. "The short season in the spring actually fired up our team because we knew that were going to have new opportunities. Seeing everyone come together and train this summer was really nice and motivating."

Campolindo's top five finishers were Ellie Buckley (2), Shea Volkmer (8), Makena Weberski (20), Daisy Penney (35), and Caroline McCool (44) who finished in second, eighth, 20th, 35th and 44th, finishing ahead of second

the race."

Lodewick felt it was more than just talent that brought the team together. "Our team unity enhanced our performances," Lodewick said. "We were able to communicate with each other and were able to get out and work during the quarantine which in the end contributed to our performance at the state tournament. We're all very proud of how we ran."

Acalanes

It was also a successful season for the Acalanes girls' team concluding the year with a fifth-place finish at the state meet. The team finished with a combined score of 174 led by Olivia Williams (1), Lauren Yee (25), Megan Yee (30), Elle Casselman (43) and Cameron Powell (75).

For Jeff Hutson, the Acalanes head coach, the season was a success as soon as things returned to a sense of normalcy. "It was all back and it was wonderful. The kids absolutely loved it," Hutson said.

Sophomore Olivia Williams was the dominant runner all season for Acalanes. Prior to the state meet, Williams won the league championship, breaking the all-time course record and the North Coast Section Division IV, also breaking that meet record. At the state meet, Williams came in second to an unaffiliated runner, which is why she earned a first place for the Acalanes team. Out of the 977 girls that ran in the championship for all levels, Williams had the third fastest time. "Olivia loves the culture and the vibe of cross country," Hutson said. "Of all the kids I've coached, she is just the eye of the tiger and is really something special."

Even with the success on the course, it was the intangibles of the team that Hutson valued the most. "The character of the girls was my proudest part of the team," Hutson said. "It's so impressive how they absolutely love, respect and support each other so well. Lauren Yee has been our captain for a long time but we're pretty much of a horizontal organization with everyone coming together. It made things much easier for me, Bruno (Morlan) and Eric (Morford) as coaches. Eric calculated that this was the fastest Acalanes collective time at state by over two minutes, which is impressive because there have been a number of good Acalanes teams."

Running as an independent, Tyler Hunt finished in 26th place in Division IV and in 172nd out of the 986 other runners at the meet. "We thought Tyler ran very well," Hutson said. "He had time of 16:05.8 which we thought was great, so he had an exceptional day."

Miramonte

It was a senior laden team that coach Tristan Tool brought to the state meet. The team was led by seniors Kate Riley (9), Ania Keenan (18), Emma Wirz (36), Claire Nolet (57) and sophomore Grace Bell (60), finishing in fifth place.

"The girls worked hard for their victory in the NorCal Championship, and it was a great confidence builder for them," Tool said.

The ultimate results at the state meet were not quite what Tool was hoping for: "Kate ran a good race (100th out of the 977 other racers)," Tool said. "We had been hoping to do better but did not do that well with our later runners. It was a longer and more difficult race than the NorCal meet, but our girls did show a lot of improvement from when we ran there at the Rough Rider Invitational with some of the girls improving by over a minute which is normally unheard of."

Tool is going to really miss this group of seniors: "They spent a lot of time together and they've all become friends and they do the same in shepherding the younger runners in a genuine way, spending a lot of time away from school doing a number of social things together. The bonding of the group has been phenomenal and a big part of their success. Kate was an especially good leader in that she is a very gritty runner and the most outwardly tough of the runners which helped in bringing the younger girls up and showing it was also cool to look and act tough."

Unlike the girls team, the boys top finishers at the NorCal meet were all underclassmen led by sophomores Asher Patel (21) and Jason Wagner (43), freshman James Jenkins (46) and juniors Ricky Davis (55) and Sean Soohoo (59), graduating only Roan Kazmierowski (62).

"This was definitely a year to build on for the boys," Tool said. "We have a solid number of kids that love it and another solid group of freshmen and sophomores that have shown a lot of potential."

Tool singled out Patel for how he had battled an injury all year. "Asher is definitely one to keep an eye on. He had almost no actual running all season, working on a bike and an elliptical and still finished first among our runners. Once he gets a full season under his belt, he is going to be very good."

Reach the reporter at: [sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com)

[back](#)

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