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## Success at State Tournament for Dons and Cougars, led by Acalanes 4x100 relay team

By Jon Kingdon



Acalanes' 4X100 relay team (from left): Ethan Torres, Paul Kuhner, Coach Escobar, Trevor Rogers, and Kyle Bielawski Photo provided

To make it to the California State Track Meet is one thing and placing is quite another. The Acalanes boys 4x100 relay team of Ethan Torres, Kyle Bielawski, Trevor Rogers and Paul Kuhner would finish in second with a time of 40.96. Kuhner would finish in 19th in the 200 meter race and Rogers finished in fourth in the long jump with a jump of 23'4" which was 3 1/2 inches longer than his jump at the Meet of Champions.

The Dons finished 12th overall in the state. "California is the most competitive meet in the country because it's the only state that does not have divisions," Acalanes head coach Joe Escobar said. "Our success is all that more impressive when you think about a school of our size to go that far and perform at that level is absolutely insane."

Their 40.96 time was the fastest time ever run by a Diablo Athletic League team, the fastest public-school time in the state this year and the fastest time in the history of the North Coast Sectional. "It's just much more impressive when you consider that none of our runners made it to the finals in an individual sprint

event," Escobar said. "Every other team had at least one runner that made it to one of those finals."

It was the ultimate team effort where the sum was greater than the whole of its parts, said Escobar. "Paul has been an incredible anchor, Trevor an incredible curve runner, Kyle an incredible leader and Ethan incredible out of the blocks," Escobar said. "They all played their parts as well as they could, and they were perfectly set up to run well together."

Last year the team did not make it to state due to a baton drop at the Tri-Valley meet so there was a determination to make sure that did not happen again, but it wasn't that easy in the end due to various injuries during the season. "Trevor did not compete until late April and Paul missed time with two hamstring injuries and the four of them did not really get to run together until the DAL finals. They only had about four weeks of time together all season and to accomplish what they did in such a short time makes it just that much more of an incredible feat. Kyle kept us going that whole time - never giving up, always coming out giving the same effort, never backing down from a challenge and keeping the boys' hearts in it. This also would not have been possible without the work of our strength coach Tim Silvera and our trainer Chris Clark."

Growing up together also contributed to the chemistry of the team. "We've all gone to school together since the sixth grade, often hanging out together," Rogers said. "In the relay, there has to be a level of trust where you have to get the baton to the other person, and you have to trust them to leave on time and they have to trust you to get it to them. With all the great athletes and fans at this event, it pushed us to go harder."

The long jump event for Rogers finished just a few minutes prior to the 4x100 relay and Escobar felt that might work against Rogers, not being able to practice handoffs prior to the race, but it was not an issue for him. "Actually, I like it because one of the events warms me up for the other and I feel that it really helps me out a lot," Rogers said.

Rogers also credits coach Joy Upshaw for performance in the long jump. "She is a really good jump coach and her work with me on my form and takeoff really helped me," Rogers said.

For Kuhner, competing in such a huge venue could have been a distraction. "Before I got the baton, my adrenaline was really pumping but Coach Escobar did such a great job in getting us prepared for this race, once each of us ran, instincts just kicked in and it was just using everything that we had been working on. We all think that we can go faster but we're all very happy to leave it off the way that we did. We always want more but at the end of the day we're all super proud of ourselves and what we were able to accomplish, and it was just a great experience."

Campolindo

Finishing in 60th, the Campolindo girls' team was a combination of strength, endurance, and speed. Pinkie Schnayer competed in the shot put, Mari Testa in three speed events and Ellie Buckley in the 3200-meter race. Josh Myer was the lone representative of the boys' team in the 100-meter race.

"If we take our year where we've had four person relays, this is up there for the numbers that we have sent," Lindquist said. "There were a couple of years where we've sent a few more but to have four individuals making it to state is an incredible accomplishment."

Junior Pinkie Schnayer finished 11th in the shot put with a throw of 39 feet, 7 \_ inches. "This was just Pinkie's second year as a shot putter," assistant coach Andy Lindquist said. "She was good last year, but to go from that to 11th in the state of California is pretty phenomenal and it shows you just how talented and hard working she is and how much potential she has out there for next year."

Senior Ellie Buckley finished her career for the Cougars by finishing in 11th in the 3200-meter race with a time of 10:42.54. "Ellie ran a smart race," Lindquist said. "The top 10 runners went through the first mile in 5:10 which is pretty fast, and Ellie was patient and moved up in the middle of the race and to finish where she did in the state of California is pretty impressive."

In her time at Campolindo, Buckley has won three state championships in cross country, three NCS championships in cross country and two NCS meet championships in track. "Ellie has been our most consistent contributor in the team's successes over the past four years," Lindquist said.

Mari Testa finished in 6th in the 100-meter hurdles with a time of 14.01, a personal and school record, and the highest finish ever for a sprinter from Campolindo. She finished in 12th in the 100 meter and 19th in the 200-meter race. "Mari held her own in those races, but the state of California is just so deep in the sprints you really have to be one of the best sprinters in the country in the flat stuff just to make the finals," Lindquist said.

As a freshman, Testa took 20 seconds to run the 100-meter hurdles and fell in love with the event. "As she got her technique down and built year after year of training, this is the end result," Lindquist said. "For Mari to show so much improvement over a course of a career, it's pretty awesome to see and it will be interesting to see how she progresses over the next couple of years at University of California."

Josh Myers ran a 10.74 in the 100-meter race finishing in 19th place. "For Josh to make it all the way to the state championship was a great accomplishment," Lindquist said. "He improved by over 0.3 of a second from the start of the year to the finish."

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