

Sports - October 2, 2015

Meeks, Slaney are leaders of the pack

by Keith Peters

The Gunn girls and Palo Alto boys have enjoyed a lot of success in cross country in recent years, thanks to standout individuals who have led the way from the front of the pack.

Runners like Ruth Graham, Tori Tyler and Sarah Robinson led the Titans to league and CCS honors while Philip MacQuitty and Lucas Matison have done the same for the Vikings.

The latest standouts at both schools are Gunn senior Gillian Meeks and Paly junior Kent Slaney. Over the space of four days, the two each won a pair of individual titles and helped their teams finish first three times with one second place.

Meeks won the individual title in Division II on Saturday at the annual Stanford Invitational. She also helped the Titans to the team crown. On Tuesday, she duplicated that effort at the SCVAL Cluster Meet No. 1 at Lynbrook High as the Titans swept individual and team honors in the El Camino Division.

Slaney also won, in Division I, at Stanford while helping the Vikings finish second in the team race. On Tuesday, he matched Meeks' effort in the SCVAL meet.

Clearly, the Gunn girls and Paly boys are headed in the right direction with Meeks and Slaney leading the way. Their efforts at Stanford were superb.

Slaney captured his first individual honor by beating 224 other runners to the finish line in the Division I race. He clocked a big personal record of 15:17.7 — a seven-second improvement — over the 5,000-meter layout (3.1 miles) to win by 15.3 seconds.

Meeks earned her second individual crown by leading 195 other runners to the finish in the Division 2 race. She ran 17:54.7 over 5K, a bit slower than the 17:42 she ran last year to win the Division I title.

Her time, however, would have gotten her first place in Saturday's Division I race, as well, as she won by a whopping 49.9 seconds.

Meeks wound up ninth overall in all divisions combined, which featured a total of 1,225 entrants. Slaney was 10th overall in a combined field of 1,350 runners for the boys.

Moreover, Meeks helped the Titans win the team title with 123 points over Maria Carrillo of Santa Rosa (179 points). Slaney, meanwhile, helped the Vikings finish second with 138 points to Bellarmine's first-place 120.

"We were hoping for Gillian's win, and it was a very happy surprise that our girls won," said Gunn coach PattiSue Plumer.

Meeks now has finished first, first and fourth over the past three years at Stanford.

Helping Gunn take the team title was Illi Gardner, who ran 19:10.7 for 12th. Emma Chiao finished 34th in 20:16.9, Joyce Shea was 35th in 20:18.4 and Claire Hu was 47th in 20:32.1.

Slaney, who won one of two varsity races at the Lowell Invitational a few weeks ago, was surprised Saturday's race went out as slow as it did with the first mile around 5:08. He trailed early on, but led for the last half of the race.

