

SPORTS



Uploaded: Sun, Sep 27, 2015, 1:56 pm

Paly, Gunn produce individual winners at the Stanford Invitational

Palo Alto junior Kent Slaney and Gunn senior Gillian Meeks pulled off a rare double in cross country at the annual Stanford Invitational on Saturday as each ran off with individual titles at the Stanford Golf Course.

Slaney captured his first individual honor by beating 224 other runners to the finish line in the boys' Division I race. He clocked 15:17.7 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 girls' 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.

Gunn competed at Division I last season but "we were moved down this year even though (Gunn's) school size remained same -- other schools got bigger," Plumer explained.

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.

Teammate Naveen Pai had another strong outing and finished 10th in 16:01.3. Sam Craig was 22nd in 16:19.4, Sam Desre was 52nd in 16:45.9 and Henry Saul finished 53rd in 16:46.6.

"I could not be more proud of my seven boys who raced," said Paly coach Kelsey Feeley. "Obviously, Kent winning the race by 15 seconds was incredibly impressive, but to make things even better, junior Naveen Pai had his second top-10 finish in the last two big races, which is a huge boost for our team scores. Also, all seven of the boys finished within the top third of competitors in their race, meaning there were no weak links.

"I am lucky enough to have about 11 boys that I can interchange as my "top 7" week to week, depending on injuries and the type of course they will be racing on. I am very much looking forward to our upcoming meets because the boys have already set the bar so high!"



Gunn senior Gillian Meeks ran away with the Division II title and helped the Gunn girls win the team title Saturday at the annual Stanford Invitational cross-country meet. Photo by Malcolm Slaney.



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