

SPORTS



Uploaded: Thu, May 4, 2017, 10:54 pm

Paly distance runners show there's strength in numbers

by Glenn Reeves/Palo Alto Online Sports

It's been clear all season that a special group of boys distance runners are on hand at Palo Alto High.

Just how special was demonstrated Thursday at Milpitas where Paly swept the 1,600 and the 3,200 during the Santa Clara Valley Athletic League's De Anza Division finals.



Margaret Redfield

There's no shortage of support with this group as the daily competition in practice provides a continual push toward achievement and personal development.

So much for the loneliness of the long-distance runner.

"After all those 7 a.m. workouts what's nice is to see them paying off in a race like this one," said Kent Slaney, after he was followed by Sam Craig and Reed Foster in a 1-2-3 finish in the 1,600.

Later on, Slaney became a double winner with a first-place finish in the 3,200 in 9:35.62, a race in which he picked up the pace and opened a big lead starting in the third lap. Naveen Pai (9:43.66) and Henry Saul (9:46.53) came in second and third.

Slaney and Pai are seniors, Craig and Foster juniors and Saul a sophomore. The distance group helped the Vikings to 100 points and a second-place finish in the boys team standings behind Los Altos (107).

Slaney's winning time in the 1,600 was 4:22.74. He has a personal-best of 4:16.62, run last year as a junior.

"This was a pretty tactical race," Slaney said. "I just mainly wanted to sweep. The early season was rocky. I had an ankle injury. But now my endurance is a whole lot better than last year."

Slaney, who is headed to MIT for college, advanced to the state meet last year and is hoping that experience will be of benefit this year when he tries to repeat that trip and surpass last year's performance.

"It was fun, a great experience," Slaney said. "It's a very different kind of thing from SCVALS and CCS with the entire heat going under 4:20."



Palo Alto's Kent Slaney (left), Reed Foster and Sam Craig swept the top three spots in the 1,600 meters.



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