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## Miramonte Girls XC Poised to Break 10-Year Slump Behind Freshman Haskell

By Spencer Silva



Cassidy Haskell took first place for small schools at the Ed Sias Invitational Sept. 14  
Photo Gint Federas

is already racking up accolades. On Saturday, Sept.

12, at the 31st annual Ed Sias Invitational - a short two-mile course that winds through Hidden Valley Park in Martinez - Haskell finished first in the small-school division with a time of 11:58.2, besting the second-place finisher by more than 20 seconds.

The team finished seventh overall at the event, which was especially encouraging because the team's second-best runner didn't participate.

Then, last weekend, at the Nike Invitational, held at De La Salle (Concord), Haskell placed sixth in the varsity girls' three-mile with a time of 18:09, tops among Division III runners. The team placed 11th overall at the meet, ahead of both Campolindo and Acalanes, with strong supporting performances from Hannah Fishlow and Arden Creson.

"It's nice having a frontrunner, that 'No. 1' penciled on your score." Henderson said.

The boys have had better luck in recent years. They were 18th at the state meet last year, and, in the early season, they placed third at Ed Sias and 24th at the Nike Invitational. Senior Pete Bull is the team's No. 1.

The Campo girls finished second in state last year, thanks to a strong senior class headlined by Toni Finnane, who tied for first at the state meet and currently runs for ACC powerhouse Notre Dame. The team is "trending younger" this fall, according to co-head coach Andy Lindquist. Despite the loss of the talent, the team placed third at Ed Sias and 16th at the Nike Invitational. The Campolindo boys took first at Ed Sias and seventh at the Nike Invitational, on the back of a fifth-place 15:47 finish from junior Jared Yabu, whom the program expects big things from this fall.

The Acalanes boys are anticipating improvement in 2015. Last fall, they participated in the state meet, which is an accomplishment itself, but ultimately they finished dead last. The team returns Cameron Gaskell, who finished fourth overall at the Nike Invitational with a time of 15:30, or 48 seconds faster than the time he ran at state last November. On the boys' side, Gaskell may

The Miramonte girls cross country team hasn't appeared in the CIF State Championship Meet, the barometer for success in high school running, since 2005. Between 2001 and 2005, during the program's so-called 'golden era,' the Mats brought home a state title, along with third and fifth place finishes. Both the boys and girls teams participated in the state meet all five of those years.

In recent seasons, the girls have barely missed qualifying, but the 10-year drought could soon be coming to an end.

"I would love to get us back to where we were," Coach Brian Henderson said.

Henderson, who coached those high-achieving teams of years past before going on hiatus, sees striking similarities in his current and former squads: they're young (only one senior), hungry, and they race smart.

And, perhaps most notably, they have a frontrunner: freshman Cassidy Haskell.

Haskell, who just began her freshman year, is just three races into her high school career, but she

be Lamorinda's best bet to challenge for a Division III state title.

According to co-head coach Nate Beach, the challenge for the Dons will be getting consistent performances from the middle of their squad. "If we can run them as a pack, I think we can get them to state," he explained.

The Acalanes girls are in a "rebuilding" period, and while making the state meet as a team is currently a lofty expectation, junior Samantha Taketa, who finished 35th overall at the Nike Invitational, has a chance to make the state meet as an individual.

As Beach explained, cross country is the type of sport where all is well that ends well. That is, meaningful races aren't run in September. "The first couple of races are dust busters," Beach said. "We expect everyone to get faster as the year goes along."

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