



2010 Redwood Empire Cross Country Recap

By Alex Wolf-Root



As we here at the Empire Runners care about all levels of the sport, it's now time to give some love to the local high schoolers who braved rain, wind, and mud this fall. So here comes the **2010 Redwood Empire Cross Country Recap!**

(Let me preface this by apologizing if this isn't a "fair and balanced" article; I do not mean to give extra coverage to some, but I'm sure I did. For full disclosure, I went to Maria Carrillo, so I'm sure I still have some sort of bias, and just know more about the NBL in general.)

Before we get into the racing action, let's look back at the situation heading into the season. On the boys' side, there were two athletes returning who earned first-team All Redwood Empire honors last year: junior **Luis Luna** of **Piner** and senior **Forrest Shaffer** of **Petaluma**. Luna just missed a medal at the DIII state meet, where he placed 11th, but did earn silver and bronze medals at the NCS and NBL Champs, respectively. Of course, in track he blitzed a 9:16.19 3,200m to rank 9th on the all-time list. Shaffer performed better at his league meet, placing second, but was one place behind Luna at NCS in fourth. But Shaffer also had the best team in the Empire pushing him, as evidenced by the next top returners.

Returning from the second team were a duo of Trojans in senior **Clark Bernard** and sophomore **Kevin Poteracke**. Bernard was 6th at the SCL champs, Poteracke 4th. Both were key in Petaluma earning their 4th straight league title.

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Petaluma also added two more Honorable Mention returners in sophomore **Ryan Douglas** (5th SCL) and senior **Prescott Nicoli** (7th SCL). So going into the season, they had 5 All-Empire returners. Nice.

On the girls' end, there were also two first-team All Empire returners in senior **Julie Nacouzi** of **Montgomery** and junior **Amber Piersol** of **Windsor**. Nacouzi peaked at the right time last year, placing 25th in the National Championships. She also won the NBL and NCS Champs, and was a narrow second at state to last year's Runner of the Year **Jacque Taylor** of **Casa Grande**. Piersol was the top SCL returner, as she was 4th in that championships race, then 6th in the NCS DII Championships. On the track she ran a 5:10.95 for 1,600m to move exactly one place of Nacouzi on the all-time Empire lists.

Coming into the year, the team to beat on the girls side was **Maria Carrillo**, and they were well represented on the second team returners, with sophomore **Lauren Kraus** and junior **Heidi Thiele**. Kraus was 4th in the NBL, 7th in the NCS DIII race, and won the 3,200m at the NBL Champs in track. Thiele placed 7th in the NBL and clinched a top-50 finish at the State Championships. From the SCL, junior **Francesca Honey** of Petaluma made second-team honors, as she was 5th in the SCL and 8th in NCS DIII. Also a second-team returner was sophomore Coastal Mountain Conference Champion **Katy Lee** of Sonoma Academy. In addition to her CMC XC title, Lee won the 1,600m and 3,200m at the CMC T&F champs.

But Cross Country is not just an individual sport, and there were some amazing team battles in tap for the season. In 2009, the Casa Grande girls won their 4th straight SCL title, becoming the only team to have four outright SCL season titles (Petaluma won in '91, '93, and '94, but tied in '92). The Petaluma boys did one better, earning their 5th straight SCL title. Points scored the last five years? 18, 15, 15, 15, 18. For those of you unfamiliar with Cross Country scoring, you add the places of your top five runners for your score. So a perfect score is 15 points. Yea. Let that sink in... Petaluma was the team to beat. Period.

On the NBL side, there was an even longer streak on the line, that of the girls of Maria Carrillo. They had been undefeated in the NBL for the 7 years, with their last loss coming in the 2002 Championship race to the Montgomery Vikings. The Puma boys had some history on their side too, as they had won 6 of the last 7 titles, with **Santa Rosa** winning the 2008 edition. But the 2009 win was anything but close, as the score at the championships was MCHS 56, Piner 56. The Pumas only won on their 6th man, and looking at returners, Piner had to be the favorite to win their first ever NBL title (they have a bunch from the SCL).

So with the way-to-long preview finished, let's look at the 2010 season!

The season kicked off, as (almost) always, with the **Rancho Cotate Invite**. The boys' race went as expected, with Forrest Shaffer winning by 18 seconds of teammate Poteracke, and two more Trojans in the top 5 (Douglas and Bernard). **Daniel Hauptman** of Maria Carrillo was the only athlete not in a Petaluma uniform to crack the top-5 with his third place finish, 20 seconds back of Shaffer.

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The girls' race was much more diversified, as only one school, Maria Carrillo, had two in the top 5. Kraus took the win in a huge 43 second margin of victory over Casa Grande sophomore **Ashley Moffett**. Third overall was the second Puma in sophomore **Brynna Thigpen**, just ahead of Montgomery's **Emily Goldfield**. Lee of Sonoma Academy was the top CMC runner in fifth.

Trying to fly under the Redwood Empire radar, the Piner Prospectors raced the next day at the **Lagoon Valley Classic** in Vacaville, and there they failed – well they failed to stay under the radar at least. As a team, they by 23 points as they went 1 (Luna), 3 (**Jaime Silva**), 4 (**Jason Saler**), 5 (Dylan Ferrell) in the race. Luna not only took the win, but won by over a minute. From this point on, he was the overwhelming favorite for an NBL title, at minimum.

At the **Ed Sias** invite Kraus earned a podium finish as she was third, with teammates Thigpen (8th) and **Taylor Graham** (10th) earning top-10 finishes as well. On the boys' side, junior **Jonathan Peck** just slipped under the 11-minute barrier on the tough 2.05 miler to earn top-Redwood Empire honors.

Piner got back on the same calendar as the rest of the Empire as they were in attendance at the **Viking Invite** at Spring Lake, and they made their presence known. Luna tied the 6th fastest time ever with his 9:58 solo run, to be the fastest runner of the day by 25 seconds! The best-of-the-rest was junior **Alexi Taylor** of **Cardinal Newman**, who clocked a solid 10:23. The frosh-soph race saw a great duel between Silva of Piner (10:30) and **Ukiah** sophomore **Paul Holden** (10:31). The top CMC finisher was **Valle Rogers**, a senior at Willits. Though all races were by grade, adding up the top times yielded a 53:19 for Piner, which ties them for fourth all-time. The next local team was Maria Carrillo, at 54:26.

While Luna's 25 second margin of victory was impressive, Nacouzi of Montgomery did one better, clocking 11:31 to win her race by 40 seconds over **El Molino** junior **Nicole Lane**, and be 30 seconds faster than any other runner from any other race (Kraus in frosh-soph). Adding times together, the Pumas stamped themselves as favorites to repeat their NBL title with a 63:46 total time to Santa Rosa's 65:42, with Casa Grande at 65:51.

That same weekend, Petaluma headed to the **De La Salle** invite, and came home with a title. Led by Shaffer's 2nd place finish on the three-mile course (15:32), and with Poteracke (7th) and Douglas (10th) in the top-10 as well, they were able to edge past Long Beach Poly, 87-94. Their average time per runner was 16:05, a time only 13 of the 207 total runners bettered.

That following Wednesday, at the second interlock meet at the NBL-hosting Spring Lake course, Piner officially became the favorites for an NBL title. Led by Luna's junior course record of 15:11 (old record held by 4-time SCL Champion **Sterling Lockert**), Piner outscored Maria Carrillo 29-31. Close enough for the Pumas to have hope, but they were now the underdogs. At the interlock at Casa Grande, CMC Champion Lee took an 11-second win over freshman **Victoria Tomaszewski** of Windsdor, who just outdistanced Lane for top SCL honors.



Alexi Taylor

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You may note that Petaluma was absent from that Wednesday. That's because they were targeting that weekend's **Stanford Invite**. And for Forrest Shaffer, it was worth it. Shaffer destroyed the competition in the DIII race with his 15:45 on the 5k course, ahead of two runners from perennial power **Campolindo**. Just behind that duo was Maria Carrillo senior Daniel Hauptman, who ran a very respectable 16:06, the second fastest of any Empire runner on the day. Poteracke also impressed at 16:11, and helped Petaluma to a second place finish. The Cardinal Newman duo of Taylor and sophomore **Charlie King** clocked 16:17 and 16:23, with the top CMC runner was Rogers of Willits at 16:30.

Nacouzi also took home a title, clocking 18:00 to win the DII race by 49 seconds. Unfortunately, this would be the highlight of her 2010, as she was sidelined with injury shortly thereafter. Also under the 20 minute mark were Kraus (4th DIII), Lee (9th DV), Lane and Tomaszewski.

Just before the league season, Luna made me add in yet another paragraph to this article as he smashed the course record at the **Scotty Bauhs Invite**, running 14:51 for three miles. In the sophomore race (the invite separates races by grades), Jaime Silva took the win in 15:38.



Ashley Moffett

The first weekend of SCL action went to form, as reigning champs Petaluma boys and Casa Grande girls took easy wins. There were some individual performances of note, specifically Moffett of Casa Grande beating Lane of El Molino by 11 seconds, with third place over 50 seconds behind the duo. Tomaszewski also took a league win, as she was 39 seconds faster than Petaluma's **Kirby Franklin**, and over a minute ahead of teammate (recovering-from-injury) Piersol.

But it was the tri-meet between Maria Carrillo, Piner, and Santa Rosa that made all the noise. The Pumas got a huge scare, as Santa Rosa came within two points (33 to MCHS's 31) of breaking a 7 year long undefeated-in-NBL-streak, led by individual surprise winner **Kelly Brooks**. For the boys, Piner didn't just surprise, they dominated, going 1-2-3 to win 23-47 over Maria Carrillo. But this was still just the first league meet of the season, and a lot can happen in a month.

But not a ton did happen. Shaffer continued to impress as he won the DIII race at the **Clovis Invite** by over 10 seconds, while Luna won the **Crystal Springs Invite** by 28 seconds. All the favorites won, with the possible exception of the Casa Grande versus Petaluma meet for the girls. Moffett of Casa Grande beat Franklin of Petaluma by 19 seconds, but that was all the Gaucho's could muster, as Petaluma had all of their scorers before Casa Grande's 2nd. Moffett then went on to place 2nd at the **Mariner Invite**, with Luna winning again at the **Rough Rider Invite**.

The next week saw some cool league meet stats, as the Maria Carrillo boys were so dominant in their tri-meet over Rancho Cotate and Elsie Allen that they would have won without running their top 20. In the SCL, Nicole Lane

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got possibly the biggest margin of victory of any Empire meet this year, as she beat the Petaluma pack by 4:57, with Windsor putting up a good fight against Casa Grande, losing just 27-31. Valle Rogers set himself up as the CMC favorite as he defeated **Evan LaBruzzo** Rincon Valley Christian and led his team to a perfect 15-point score.

In the last invites before the league champs, Nicole Lane and Luis Luna earned wins in the downpour that was the **Yoshaany Rahm Invite** at Ukiah HS. But Ashley Moffett was the biggest winner, winning one of the Division II races at **"The Worlds Largest Cross Country Competition,"** the **Mt. SAC Invite**, setting herself up as the favorite for the SCL title. Lauren Kraus of Maria Carrillo actually ran one second faster (18:27-18:28), but was in a different race.

Going into the league championships, for the SCL Petaluma was undefeated on both the boys' and girls' side, with Casa Grande having only one loss, to Petaluma, for both squads. In the NBL, Piner was 7-0, with Maria Carrillo having their only loss in that first league meet. The Puma girls were still 7-0, with Santa Rosa next at 6-1. The Coastal Mountain Conference is very confusing, with a CMC North and a CMC South. Sonoma Academy was undefeated for both in the south, with the Willits boys undefeated up north.

COASTAL MOUNTAIN CONFERENCE CHAMPIONSHPS:

Girls: As it was last year, so was it in 2010. Katy Lee, the defending champion from Sonoma Academy, was the run-away victor, clocking 19:35 on the Asti Winery course hosted by Cloverdale. That time shattered the old course record of 20:09 from 2007, set by SA's **Grace Hafner**. Also running alone was **St. Helena's Julie Eyer**, who's 20:55 was 1:20 behind Lee's and 38 seconds ahead of the third place finisher. Always tough to run fast alone, and especially impressive for a freshman. In third to help secure the win for SA was **Kiana Herold**, who narrowly outdistanced **Fort Bragg** junior **Alexandra Sciocchetti**. Sciocchetti was the top CMC South runner; while the conference is broken in halves, they all run one championship together and score a total and a broken-down meet. Fifth was senior **Ali Van Zandt** of **Rincon Valley Christian**, followed by fellow seniors **Noelle Hosler** of **Santa Rosa Christian**, **Chloe Rojas** of **Clearlake**, and **Katie Carlsen** of **St. Vincent**. Rounding out the top-ten were **Erin Thomas** of **Mendocino** and **Cloverdale's Yari Sanchez**, who both clocked 23:20.

Third and fourth for SA was **Claire Sweeney** in 12th, and **Bonnie Campbell** in 21st, both breaking 25 minutes. Due to the large number of schools in the CMC, and noting that they are all "small schools," it shouldn't be too shocking that the final scorers were well down in the overall standing. That being said, Sonoma Academy took the win with their 5th and final scorer, **Katherine Parsells**, back in 44th place (though 35th in team scoring).

The Coyotes of Sonoma Academy ended up taking the win 63-78 over St. Helena, with Cloverdale (88), Clearlake (91), and Santa Rosa Christian (98) rounding out the top 5.

Boys: The boys' race was more of a coronation for Valle Rogers of Willits, who had been undefeated in his entire season up to this point. He won handily over Evan LaBruzzo of Rincon Valley Christian, 17:00 to 17:20, with Valle's teammate in **Chris Orr** taking third. **Brandon Hicks** of Santa Rosa Christian was 4th, but after that it the Sonoma

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Academy show, with **Jax Reiff**, **Jacob Gaynor**, and **Graham Johnson** going 5-6-7 for the Coyotes. Santa Rosa Christian's 2nd man in **Isaac Vandersluis** was only one second back of that SA pack, but the Coyote's 4th man, **Eli Booker**, made sure it was going to be very hard for anyone else to challenge for the team title, though Willits did get the final top-ten spot with **Dalton Aguilar**.

But SA's fifth man, **Jason Siegal**, wasn't far back in 13th, which was easily good enough to give the Coyotes their first ever CMC title, winning 35 to Willits's 62. The battle for third was extremely close, with Cloverdale (89) edging **Upper Lake** (93) and Santa Rosa Christian (99).

NORTH BAY LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIPS:

Boys: There were two main questions to be answered in the boys' race at the NBL Championships:

- 1) Would Piner again beat Maria Carrillo to earn their first ever NBL title?
- 2) How fast would Luis Luna run?

The answers were "yes" and "fast"

Luna took the lead from the gun, and was already separated before the very first hill. Since Ryan Mack at the 1998 NBL Championships, where the top-3 times ever on the course were recorded, no one has broken the 15 minute barrier. Mack's course record was 14:50. Was Luna going to set a new record? Not this year. But did he break 15? Yes, yes he did. His 14:59 is the second fastest ever on the course, and easily the junior class record. And he ran the whole thing solo.

To me, the biggest individual surprise was who came in second. While I had a shortlist of favorites for the best-non-Luna runner, I was shocked to see sophomore sensation Paul Holden run a scintillating 15:25. Not only did that earn him second in the race, it also put him second on the all-time junior list. Who's number one? Luis Luna.

Then came a slew of runners cracking the prestigious 16 minute barrier. Third went to Alexi Taylor of Cardinal Newman, who ran 15:28 to set a school record and tie for the 4th junior all-time. 4th went to Maria Carrillo's Daniel Hauptman in 15:43, with Cardinal Newman's Charlie King earning 5th at 15:46 for 9th on the all-time sophomore list. Piner's duo of Jason Saler (15:50) and Jaime Silva (15:54) placed 6th and 7th, respectively. The last sub-16 went to Maria Carrillo's **Colin Gibson** at 15:55. Rounding out the top-10 were Jonathan Peck from Santa Rosa and **Jamie Goldfield** of Montgomery, both running 16 flat. Owch.

As the astute observer may have noticed, three of those top ten finishers were from Piner, while Maria Carrillo and Cardinal Newman each had two. While Newman's 1-2 punch scored 8 points to the Puma's 12, Newman fell back after that, finishing fourth behind Santa Rosa. The battle for the title came down to, as expected, Piner and Carrillo. Piner's fourth man, Dylan Ferrell (13th) outscored the fourth man for Carrillo, and while the Pumas were able to put 6 before Piner's fifth, it wasn't enough to stop the inevitable.



That's right, the Piner High School Cross Country Prospectors won their first ever North Bay League Title.

The score was 49-56, with Santa Rosa third at 83. Cardinal Newman just edged Montgomery, 105 to 106, with Ukiah (149), Rancho Cotate (177), and Elsie Allen (243) rounding out the race.

Looking at the team times, Piner's 1:19:41 tied the meet and NBL record set in 1988, and tied for fourth on the overall list, behind only the '07, '08, and '09 Petaluma squad (more on that in the SCL section). Maria Carrillo's team time of 1:20:34 put them 10th all-time, and gave them the dubious distinction of being the fastest team to lose at Spring Lake.

It's amazing to note that, of the top 10, only Carrillo's Daniel Hauptman is graduating in the spring, are only two others in the top twenty. Also of note, in 20th was **Aden Holmes** of Santa Rosa, who clocked 16:35 to become the 13th fastest freshman of all time, smashing his personal best by over 40 seconds. One possible reason: He bought his first pair of racing shoes the day before the meet!

Girls: With Nacouzi injured, and Carrillo leader Kraus suffering an ankle sprain just days before the finals, the individual race seemed wide open, and was sure to factor into the team race. The Pumas had survived a scare from Santa Rosa at their tri-meet, but were not out of the woods yet. Kraus's absence, and that of another scorer, put the team title in doubts.

From the first finisher, the Pumas were in trouble. Taking advantage of the more open field, the Panther's Kelly Brooks took the NBL title in 18:45, beating Brynna Thigpen of Maria Carrillo by 8 seconds. While Luna on the boys' side ran faster than only one other runner in history, Brooks ran the 45th fastest time ever recorded, and had the slowest winning time since 1993. But a win is a win, and I doubt she cared. Especially not after the team scoring was reported.

The team battle couldn't have been closer. In third was Puma Taylor Graham, with **Eva Herbst** of Santa Rosa in fourth. So at two runners it was tied, 5-5. In 5th was Rancho Cotate's **Melissa Hansen**, who was followed by **Kelly Birkland** of MCHS and 800m standout **Sadia Ibrahim** of Santa Rosa. At three runners: MCHS 11, SRHS 12. The top freshman in the race was **Mayra Villa** of Piner in 8th, also the last sub-20 runner of the day, and she was followed by **Gretel Petrie** of MCHS. Rounding out the top 10 was Montgomery's Emily Goldfield. Santa Rosa's 4th was just back of her in **Emily Rozga**, giving MCHS a 20-23 advantage with one runner to go. But that was where Santa Rosa showed their strength, as their 5th and 6th runners in **Carly Miller** and **Evvv Archibald** were just behind in 12th and 13th. One more runner, **Anjali Mathews** of Montgomery would slip in before the Puma's fifth runner in **Sophie Ramos**.

So after five runners it was SRHS at 35 and MCHS at 35. Yup. But, as noted above, Santa Rosa's 6th came in before MCHS's 5th. And the tie-breaker goes to whoever has the fastest 6th runner, which clearly was SRHS. The Pumas fought a tough battle, which must have been especially painful seeing as their top runner had to sit out, but when the chips were down the Santa Rosa High School Cross Country Panthers were crowned the North Bay League Champions, their first title since 1998.



Notes: Like the boy's race, only one runner in the top 10 will graduate in the spring: NBL Champion Kelly Brooks. Two more in the top 20 will graduate as well: SRHS's Carly Miller and Piner's **Yolanda Luna**. Maria Carrillo only graduates their seventh runner in **Alexandra Ecker**, so next year should be another exciting battle!

Also of note is that Maria Carrillo's team time of 1:38:29 is actually faster than Santa Rosa's 1:38.46, but cross country scores on places, not time. All about beating your competitor!

SONOMA COUNTY LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIPS:

Girls: Going into the race, Casa Grande had won the last 4 team titles, as well as the last four individual titles. But all of those were won by last year's California DIII State Champion Jacque Taylor, so the Gauchos had to hope someone else could step it up. And that's just what sophomore Ashley Moffett did.

Running 18:01 for the 17th fastest time ever at Spring Lake, Moffett started Casa Grande's championship run off with the low stick. But her title wasn't easy, as just 4 seconds back was El Molino's Nicole



Lane, who tied for the 18th fastest time ever on the course, and also set a new school record. There was a huge gap until the first Petaluma runner, Kirby Franklin, crossed in 19:01 for third, Casa Grande #2 Chloe Hall and Windsor's freshman standout Victoria Tomaszewski just behind at 19:08 and 19:09. Casa Grande then got a third runner across the line in senior **Eva Luu**, to start things off very well for the Gauchos. Windsor actually had their number two runner, Amber Peirsol in 7th, finish before Petaluma's second, though Windsor would end up in the bronze medal position. Petaluma showed their strength as the rest of the top ten went to **Audrey Behen**, **Maddie Crum**, and **Hailey Lynch**, who just squeaked under the 20 minute barrier with a 19:59.

While Casa Grande had 9 points through three runners, and Petaluma's third scored 8 alone, the depth of the Trojans was unmatched, as their 5th crossed in 12th and their 6th and 7th in 14th and 16th, before Casa Grande could get even their 4th scorer. When all was said and done, Petaluma broke the chain of Casa Grande team titles by a close 37-44.

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Boys: To say this was the Petaluma show would be an understatement. By all accounts, Forrest Shaffer just tried to help his teammates along, and cruised to a 15:27 for the win. He pulled along arguably the best sophomore duo in Empire history, with Kevin Poteracke and Ryan Douglas running 15:29 and 15:32, respectively. These times make them the third and fourth fastest sophomores on the course ever, behind only Luna from last year and Paul Holden of Ukiah from the day before. And if that wasn't enough Petaluma's 4th man in Clark Bernard came in, you guessed it, 4th overall, running 15:47.

Following the Trojans was a duo from Casa Grande. **Austin Minnick** and **Ben Tarango**, both seniors, ran 16:03 and 16:10, and were followed by fellow senior **Gustavo Vasquez** of **Analy** (16:17) as the only runners to stop a Petaluma sweep. Petaluma finished their scoring with **Noah Forrey** in 8th, and placed **Seth Yungert** in 8th for good measure. 10th place went to Casa Grande's third runner, **Daryn Cubba**, who outdistanced **Sonoma's Alex Conner** 16:33 to, well, 16:33.

If you're doing your math, you'll see that Petaluma scored a total of 18 points. Amazing. Even more amazing is that every other 5th man from the rest of the SCL scored more than 20 points, with only Casa Grande able to have a 4th place better than 18!

And it's not like the SCL was week competition. It took the second fastest team time ever (78:36) to accomplish this feat. After the day, the top team times on the Spring Lake course are as follows: Petaluma 2008, Petaluma 2010, Petaluma 2007, and Petaluma 2009.

Unlike the NBL, seven of the top 10 in the race are seniors, so next year's race should see plenty of new faces up front. But the three non-seniors in that top-10? Why all from Petaluma, of course!

LEAGUE NOTES:

While you can never fully accurately compare results from two cross country races, both the NBL and SCL championships happened on Spring Lake, and were separated by under 24 hours. So some decent, but not perfect, comparisons can be made. And again, it's all about beating the competitors, not time, which is especially worth nothing when it comes to SCL Champion Forrest Shaffer and NBL Champion Kelly Brooks.

On the girls' side, seven of the top 10 came from the SCL meet, though each race had 10 in the top 20. Only two seniors, Kelly Brooks and Eva Luu, finished with top-20 times, so next year's championships should see some familiar faces.

Overall, four girls broke the 19 minute barrier, with 18 under 20 minutes. 17 runners in each race went under 21 minutes.

For the boys, the SCL had four in the top 10, though they were all from Petaluma. The NBL had considerably more depth, with 19 of the top 30 being from that race. But there's no question that Petaluma was the best team, as they had four in the top 10 and five in the top 25. But Maria Carrillo, despite being the third fastest team of the weekend, had six runners in the top-20, the only school to do so.



For times, a whopping 12 broke 16 minutes, with two more at 16 flat. 42 runners were under 17 minutes, with, again two at 17 flat. Clearly this was one of the stronger years for Redwood Empire boys' cross country in a long time.

NORTH COAST SECTION CHAMPIONSHIPS:

While local bragging rights are all well and good, the North Coast Section Championships had much more on the line: berths to the State Meet. Races there are run by school size, with Division I being the largest and V the smallest. The Redwood Empire doesn't have a single DI school, but in all 8 other races, at least one runner from the Redwood Empire qualified on to the State Championships.

Note: Conditions were rainy, muddy, and changed in a different order than I'm telling the results here, so times are not really comparable across races.

DII: Last year, the Empire saw a thrilling duel between Nacouzi and Taylor as they went 1-2 in the section championships. Well newly crowned SCL Champion Ashley Moffett wanted a piece of that too, as she took home the DII title in a solid 18:43 to win by 5 seconds. Earning the last medal in 7th was Windsor's Amber Peirsol, with Kelly Brooks running 19:57 for 12th. In 13th with a time of 19:58 was Victoria Tomaszewski, but she will have to wait until next year (and the year after, and the year after) to go to state, as Brooks took the 5th and final individual berth.

For the boys. Paul Holden took second overall and was the first individual qualifier in 16:17. He was joined by Casa Grande's Austin Minnick (16:31) and Montgomery's **Jose Mendoza** (16:39) as State Meet qualifiers. In the team race, three went from DII boys, with that third spot going to Alamada with 129. 4th and 5th? Casa Grande and Santa Rosa at 135 and 137. Owch.

DIII: The boys' race for DIII was the best for the Redwood Empire, no question. Leading from the gun was Luna at 15:23, and the best-of-the-rest was Forrest Shaffer in 15:31. Sophomore sensations Ryan Douglas and Kevin Poteracke were 4th and 5th overall, giving the Trojan's a huge advantage against main challenger Campolindo. It turned out to be enough, as Petaluma scored 65 to Campolindo's 80. Only 3rd place Las Lomas with 124 scored within double Petaluma. That's right, even Piner at 144, who was still good enough to qualify for state



themselves, more than doubled Petaluma's score. Not to be lost in the fray was Maria Carrillo's Daniel Hauptman, who's 15:54 put him in 10th, earning him a trip to the state championships.

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The girls' DIII race may have been slightly less exciting for the Redwood Empire, but shoutouts have to go out to Campolindo's **Carrie Verdon** and **Grace Orders**, for going 1-2 in an amazingly fast 17:19 and 17:38. No one was even close. Actually, the next closest was Puma Lauren Kraus, who clocked a still-impressive 18:28. Petaluma's Kirby Franklin, at 19:13, was just one second off a trip to state as well.

DIV: Nicole Lane's 19:05 was good enough for second and a trip to state, though no other Redwood Empire athletes were in the top 25. For the boys', Alexi Taylor's 16:26 got him to state, as did Vale Rogers's 16:27. Charlie King was a mere one second, though two places, out of a trip as he finished in a still respectable 16:30.

DV: Three CMC runners punched tickets to state, with Evan LaBruzzo of RVC leading the charge at 17:27 for 9th. Jax Reiff became the first Sonoma Academy Coyote to earn a trip to state with his 17:40, while the last state spot went to **Brandon Hicks** of Santa Rosa Christian at 17:47. Also at 17:47 was SA's number two in Jacob Gaynor, though he was one place too far back to qualify on. Katy Lee was the only local to go on for the girls, as she ran 19:09 for 6th.

CALIFORNIA STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS:

While only a handful of Redwood Empire athletes even made it to the state meet, there was some hardware brought home to Sonoma County. Three individuals and one team earned precious top-10 spots, with another three individuals in the top 20.

The top performer was Piner's Luis Luna, who's 15:32 put him 6th in the DIII race. While only 5 seconds back, Forrest Shaffer was 4 places back, earning that final 10th spot. For the girls, it was Katy Lee of Sonoma Academy who was 7th in DV. That's right, 6th in the NCS race and 7th at the state race. If that's not peaking at the right time, I don't know what is!

Lauren Kraus (14th DIII), Alexi Taylor (14th DIV), and Nicole Lane (19th DIV) also earned top-20 finishes. NCS Champion Moffett faced a huge challenge from the larger Southern Section schools and finished 28th.

Led by Shaffer's individual medal, Petaluma again found themselves on in the top 10, as they finished 7th as a team. Poteracke and Douglas were again standout sophomores, clocking 15:57 and 15:59 to break the prestigious 16 minute barrier.

Well that is the end of this little recap of the 2010 Redwood Empire High School Cross Country season. While the post-season already got some coverage in various pockets of the interwebs, I hope you enjoyed the slightly more detailed look at how the season progressed for our local runners. These athletes all worked extremely hard to get to where they are today (or were a few weeks ago), and deserve much more coverage than we can give them here. So to all the Redwood Empire harriers, we say congratulations on your 2010 campaign, and boy oh boy we can't wait for track!