

The Empire Runner



The Prez Sez...

There was something of an oddity in Empire hurdles this year, as two of the top three boys were from small-schools in the Coastal Mountain Conference. These young men are **Jemal Williams** of Sonoma Academy, and **Caleb Cunha** of Fort Bragg. (The other is Casa Grande's **Adam Lundquist**.) All season long these two have been tearing it up, posting top times in both the 110m hurdles and the 300m hurdles.

Cunha has been faster, especially in the long hurdles, but Williams has had his share of success as well. He earned the Athlete of the Meet at the Santa Rosa All City meet, where he won both hurdle races. To be fair, he also is a very good jumper,

while Cunha has stayed on the track.

Still, going into the CMC Championship meet, Cunha was the favorite in both hurdles. He had run a few tenths better for the season in the short hurdles, and a few seconds faster in the long. But none of that mattered when the gun fired in the 110's. Williams and Cunha were neck and neck the entire race.

1st place: Jemal Williams, 15.52

2nd place: Caleb Cunha, 15.52

That's right, same time to the hundredth of a second.

And the long hurdles... went as expected, with Cunha dominating for the win. But both athletes qualified on to the Class A Championship meet the next week. The Class A would qualify top-3 per event for the NCS Meet of Champions, with top-4 at NCS MOC going on to the State Meet.

There, Cunha just edged Williams, 15.25 to 15.26. Both safely on to MOC.

On to the 300m hurdles, Cunha's big event. It was out of the question for Williams to upset Cunha here, but would he too qualify on for MOC?

Yes. And no.

On the penultimate hurdle, disaster struck. Cunha, expected to fight for a spot at the State Championships, hit a hurdle. And went down. That's all a part of the game when you're flying over 36" hurdles. Williams and the rest of the field flew by. Cunha got up fast, but not fast enough. He caught all the way up to 4th, but 4th may as well have been last, as it was top three only that advanced. His chance of a state meet berth was gone. Williams, however, advanced in third.

So Williams defeated his biggest league rival, earning a trip to the prestigious North Coast Section Meet of Champions. How would you celebrate? Well, if your name is Jemal Williams, you don't. No, it's not that you don't celebrate, but you don't take the 300m hurdle spot at NCS MOC.

Run Happy,

Alex Wolf-Roat