

HIGH SCHOOL CROSS COUNTRY NOTEBOOK

Local runners in good spots to reach state

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WALNUT — While the CIF-Southern Section Prelims were broken up into heats on Saturday at Mount San Antonio College, the section finals this weekend will all come down to one race for each gender in each division.

That makes it easier to match teams up with competition in an effort to gauge which teams and individual runners have a good chance of advancing to the CIF State Championship at Woodward Park in Fresno on Nov. 28. Although no race is the same, if every competitor runs the same time at Mount SAC this upcoming Saturday as they did this weekend, two teams and two individuals would likely advance in the Valley.

Teams need to finish in the top seven to qualify for the state meet. Individuals need to cross the line 20th or better, but runners that made it to the section finals without their teams also have to finish fifth or better among individual qualifiers.

Based on time, both the Desert Christian High boys and girls teams would advance to Clovis if the results played out the same. Even though teams advance by points and not total time, the Knight girls had the fifth-best Division 5 team time in 108 minutes, 27 seconds, while the Desert Christian boys had the sixth best team time in 86:44.

That doesn't guarantee either



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TOP 10 — Desert Christian's Scott Acton finished seventh Saturday at the CIF-Southern Section preliminaries as the Knights advanced from the Division 5 races to next weekend's finals.

team will advance, but it shows each is on track.

"If we cut 10 seconds each runner, we're advancing," Knights boys coach Andy Visokey said.

Desert Christian's Scott Acton, who finished seventh in his

See **RUNNING** on C3

RUNNING:

Melena, Lopez will make bids as individuals

From D1

heat could qualify individually if he places in the top 20. He had the 21st-best time in his division Saturday.

Eastside's Steven Melena advanced to finals with a third-place finish in 15:29 in his Division 2 Heat 3 race. That time would have been enough to win the second heat by 5 seconds, and was the sixth-best overall time in the four heats.

Even though two of the runners that beat Melena also were individual qualifiers, he should be in good position to advance to the state championships. However, it will present a different challenge for him to focus on where he is in the race relative to the other individual qualifiers.

"You really have to run a different race," Lions coach Gil Gomez said. "You really have to change your outlook. Strategy kind of goes out the window.

Vanessa Lopez's time also would have been good enough to move on. The Highland freshman's time of 18:28 in the third Division 3 race would have been fast enough to finish in fourth place in each of the three other heats, and was good enough to tie for 15th overall with Jenna Carpenter from Chino Hills. Carpenter also tied Lopez for fourth-fastest individual qualifier.

"It gives her an opportunity to really look at next week for focusing on state," Bulldogs coach John Johnston said. "We're pretty optimistic for Clovis."



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BIG FINISH — Highland's Vanessa Lopez, right, chases San Clemente's Sarah Darby in the stretch in a girls Division 1 heat. Lopez passed Darby and Warren's Melissa Quintero on the final stretch to take sixth place and qualify for this week's race.

Knight's Bryan Guijarro, the third and final individual qualifier from the Valley, ran a time of 15:31 in his Division 1 Heat 2 race, good for fifth place. That tied him for the 20th-fastest runner with Vista Mar's Bryce Rausa, but Guijarro came in ninth out of individual qualifiers.

"I think he has a good chance to run an even better race," Hawks coach Gina Peterson said. "It's going to be a tighter pack, and he likes running in the front pack."

The Paraclete girls team had the eighth-fastest time out of Division 4 in 103:27. The Spirits were just 40 seconds off seventh-place

Templeton's time, and their coach, Andy Helme, isn't putting too much weight into previous races.

"Strange things always happen in championships, it doesn't matter what the sport," he said. "We just have to go out and run."

Paraclete's Melissa Bauer also could return to state as an individual qualifier. She had the 24th-fastest time in her division Saturday.

Paraclete's boys team crossed the line in 86:44, which was the 11th-fastest time in Division 4.