

DC's Acton attains personal goal; Valley teams show well at Mt. SAC

By ERIC SHANNON
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WALNUT — As Scott Acton walked away from the Mount San Antonio College Invitational on Friday, his eyes lit up and he couldn't hold back his smile.

And this was after coming in 16th place.

It may have been the happiest Acton has ever been after finishing outside of the top 15, because the Desert Christian High sophomore did something far more important. He crossed the line in less than 17 minutes.

"I'm very stoked," said Acton, who finished the Division V sweepstakes race in 16 minutes and 57 seconds. "That was my goal. I don't race for place."

The finish was especially sweet for him, because of his disappointing season as a freshman. Acton, who suffered a stress fracture early last year, missed much of the season, including the Mount SAC Invitational. He came back just in time to race the course at the CIF Southern Section Prelims in November, but finished in 20:41 after just a few weeks of training.

"I'm doing so much better than last year," he said. "I came back and only had three weeks."

Even though Acton had run on the hilly, 3-mile course before, he wasn't able to take full advantage of it until he was healthy.

"It's a course built for me because my strengths are downhill," he said. "A hilly course for me is way better than a flat course."

The Knights' second-place runner Aaron Acosta made a late push and was just 14 seconds behind Acton in 22nd place. Acosta improved his 18:18 time from last year by more than a minute.

As a team, Desert Christian finished ninth out of 12 teams with 183 points. Although Knights coach Andy

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Visokey wasn't entirely pleased with the outcome, he has no regrets about putting his team in the showcase race against some of the best competition Division V has to offer.

"As a team we didn't do as well as I would have liked, but I got a great run out of my top two runners," Visokey said. "We could have easily run a trophy in the normal race, but I felt it was better for these guys to go against the big boys."

Acton and Acosta weren't the only Desert Christian runners to have solid performances on Friday. Junior Kristen Parsons led the Knights girls team with a time of 19:49, good for ninth place.

Parsons, who has steadily improved as the season has gone on, appears to be kicking it into gear at just the right time.

"Kristen had an amazing race," Desert Christian coach Amy Spoelstra said. "She's just been building. She just has so much potential."

Her teammate, Emily Kennedy, was just three spots back at 20:12, but still didn't look fully recovered after missing two weeks because of sickness and only having the past week and half to get back in shape. On top of that Spoelstra also thinks that, mentally, the sophomore is still learning how to get the most out of her body.

"She's still getting back into it,"

Spoelstra said. "She's still figuring out how to give it her complete all in every race. She has a lot of talent, she just has to learn how to be really tired at the end of the race."

Charity Schroeder was 23rd in 21:11, Kylee Hall was 34th in 21:44 and Charlee White was 40th in 22:10 for the Knights, who finished second with 101 points.

"I think that we did great," Spoelstra said. "Mostly we were just training for prelims, and everyone did really well."

In the Division IV showcase race, the Paraclete girls team finished in sixth place with 174 points. Considering the competition he was going up against, Spirits coach Andy Helme was more than happy with the results.

"Holy cow we looked great today," Helme said. "I'm very pleased with that."

It came as no surprise that junior Melissa Bauer led the way for Paraclete, as she finished in 12th place in 19:49.

But what satisfied Helme more than anything was seeing his second through fifth runners finish just 26 seconds apart.

"We had a great group two through five," Helme said. "They all ran a great race."

Sabrina Huelga was 35th and Madison Grenier was 36th, both with a time of 20:58. Alissa Huerta finished 46th in 21:24, one spot and three seconds ahead of Christina Cordano.

The Paraclete boys didn't have the same success staying in a pack, but they still had a solid showing:

The Spirits finished in seventh place with 191 points and were led by Ricky Ruelas, who finished in 21st place in 16:56.

"I was happy with our boys and girls team today," Helme said.