



Kennedy High runner forging her own identity

Kennedy junior Alejandra Lopez is among the top small school cross country runners in the state. ANNA REED/STATESMAN JOURNAL

Junior prepares to step out of senior's shadows, come into her own

GARY HOROWITZ
APPEAL TRIBUNE

MT. ANGEL – Alejandra Lopez would enjoy running even if it didn't involve competition.

The fact that she's among the top small school cross country runners in the state is a bonus.

"I like running because it relieves stress," said Lopez, a junior at Kennedy High School. "When you're running for competition it's like you have to do this. It just adds on more stress. But I do enjoy competition sometimes."

Lopez – her friends call her Ale – has excelled in competition when times and placing matters, finishing fifth in the 3A/2A/1A state cross country meet last year. She also was fourth in the 1,500- and 3,000-meter distances in the 2016 the outdoor track and field season.

Despite those accomplishments, Lopez is often second fiddle on her own team behind senior Kaylin Cantu.

"I kind of feel like (Lopez) is sometimes running in her shadow a little bit and doesn't get credit for how good she is," Kennedy head coach Steve Ritchie said.

Cantu, a three-time district champion, was third in the state cross country meet last season, and second at state in the 1,500 and third in the 3,000.

Typically, Cantu and Lopez run together in cross country meets, but Cantu has finished ahead of Lopez in all but one race during their high school careers.

They are good friends and make each other better.

"In training, she's always right behind me and in races she's right behind me, too," Cantu said. "It

pushes me to go harder."

At the recent Seaside Three Course Challenge Meet, which featured 240 competitors representing 75 schools from Oregon, Washington and California, Cantu took first place and Lopez was ninth in the "Difficult Course" race. Kennedy won the small school division team title.

Next year Lopez will take center stage for Kennedy, but she'll miss having Cantu around on a daily basis. Lopez broke Cantu's sophomore school record in cross country, covering the 3.1 mile district course in 19:20.8.

"She's always a little bit ahead of me, but that's how I pace myself. I don't know what I'm gonna do next year," Lopez said with a smile.

Cantu is the school record holder in cross country; Lopez has the second-fastest time.

Said Cantu: "I don't think she knows what she can do."

There is more to Lopez's life than running. She's an excellent student and has volunteered for various projects, including mosaic design work at Coolidge-McClaine Park in Silverton.

"If I ask for volunteers to help with a run she's always the first one to raise her hand," Ritchie said. "She wants to help."

Lopez has modest goals for the 2017 cross country season: Place at least as high as last year. And continue to have fun, of course.

In the winter months, she might give swimming or wrestling a try.

"During the winter we get a break. That's a good time to run," she said.

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STEVE RITCHIE, KENNEDY HIGH SCHOOL HEAD COACH, REGARDING JUNIOR ALEJANDRA LOPEZ BEHIND SENIOR KAYLIN CANTU

STATESMAN JOURNAL HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL POSITIONAL POWER RANKINGS

Each week, Statesman Journal reporters Bill Poehler, Gary Horowitz, and Pete Martini rank the best high school football players in Salem and the Mid-Willamette Valley.

Quarterback

Seniors Grant Thies of West Salem and Quinn Legner of Cascade made huge jumps up the Statesman Journal's quarterback power rankings, in large part due to their legs.

Both ran for two touchdowns in convincing wins last week, but Sprague senior Spencer Plant still sits atop the rankings after throwing two touchdown passes against Grants Pass.

- 1. Spencer Plant, Sprague**
Sept. 29 result: Beat Grants Pass 54-27.
- 2. Levi Nielsen, Silverton**
Sept. 29 result: Lost to Crescent Valley 33-13.
- 3. Grant Thies, West Salem**
Sept. 29 result: Beat North Salem 48-7.
- 4. R.J. Veliz, Blanchet Catholic**
Sept. 29 result: Beat Colton 20-6.
- 5. Quinn Legner, Cascade**
Sept. 29 result: Beat Stayton 58-14.
- 6. Peter Mendazona, Central**
Sept. 29 result: Beat Dallas 21-14
- 7. Erik Barker, McNary**
Sept. 29 result: Beat Forest Grove 35-14.
- 8. Holden Smith, St. Paul**
Sept. 29 result: Beat Santiam 38-12.
- 9. Grant Carley, Santiam Christian**
Sept. 29 result: Lost 37-19 to Dayton.
- 10. Tyler Parr, Amity**
Sept. 29 result: Beat Sheridan 32-7.

Running backs

Sprague senior Noah Mellen rose to the top of the Statesman Journal's power rankings at running back after a four touchdown performance against Grants Pass. Stayton's Jerry Daniels performed well early in the season, but didn't play



Silverton's Spencer Clements, left, has moved up to third place for wide receivers/tight ends in the Statesman Journal high school football positional power rankings.

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against Cascade as he had a foot in a boot on the sidelines and dropped off the list.

- 1. Noah Mellen, Sprague**
Sept. 29 result: Beat Grants Pass 54-27.
- 2. Dru Cook, Scio**
Sept. 29 result: Beat Jefferson 58-18.
- 3. Jacob Denning, West Salem**
Sept. 29 result: Beat North Salem 48-7.
- 4. Justin Herberger, St. Paul**
Sept. 29 result: Beat Santiam 38-12.
- 5. Rigo Padilla, North Salem**
Sept. 29 result: Lost to West Salem 48-7.
- 6. Hunter Meissner, Silverton**
Sept. 29 result: Lost to Crescent Valley 33-13.
- 7. Brandon Piete, Regis**
Sept. 29 result: Lost to Salem Academy 26-13.
- 8. Ethan Coffey, Cascade**
Sept. 29 result: Beat Stayton 58-14.
- 9. Brody Davidson, Santiam**

Sept. 29 result: Lost to St. Paul 38-12.

10. Brian Hatch, Amity
Sept. 29 result: Beat Sheridan 32-7.

Wide receivers/tight ends

West Salem junior receiver Anthony Gould remains atop the Statesman Journal positional power rankings for tight ends and wide receivers. The biggest mover on the list was Silverton senior Spencer Clements, who moved up to third with now seven touchdown receptions and 290 yards in the air.

- 1. Anthony Gould, West Salem**
Sept. 29 result: Beat North Salem 48-7.
- 2. Alex Altringer, Sprague**
Sept. 29 result: Beat Grants Pass 54-27.
- 3. Spencer Clements, Silverton**
Sept. 29 result: Lost to Crescent Valley 33-13.
- 4. Teagan Quitoriano, Sprague**

Sept. 29 result: Beat Grants Pass 54-27.

5. Zontel Brown, McKay
Sept. 29 result: Lost 46-14 to West Albany.

6. Treve Earhart, Dallas
Sept. 29 result: Lost 21-14 to Central.

7. Gavin Baughman, South Salem
Sept. 29 result: Beat McMinnville 39-37.

8. Gage Hazelton, Salem Academy
Sept. 29 result: Beat Regis 36-12.

9. Payton Richardson, Amity
Sept. 29 result: Beat Sheridan 32-7.

10. Max Long, Sprague
Sept. 29 result: Beat Grants Pass 54-27.

Defenses

West Salem's football team took over the top spot in the Statesman Journal positional rankings for defenses after defeating North Salem 48-7. Blanchet is still one of the top teams, having held opponents to 51 points this season.

1. West Salem
Sept. 29 result: Beat North Salem 48-7.

2. Blanchet
Sept. 29 result: Beat Colton 20-6.

3. St. Paul
Sept. 29 result: Beat Santiam 38-12.

4. Sprague
Sept. 29 result: Beat Grants Pass 54-27.

5. Silverton
Sept. 29 result: Lost to Crescent Valley 33-13.

6. Central
Sept. 29 result: Beat Dallas 21-14

7. Dayton
Sept. 29 result: Beat Santiam Christian 37-19.

8. Willamina
Sept. 29 result: Beat Gervais 53-7.

9. Scio
Sept. 29 result: Beat Jefferson 58-18.

10. Santiam Christian
Sept. 29 result: Lost 37-19 to Dayton.