

EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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Hermiston's Sanchez is ready to run

Cydney Sanchez overcomes injuries and illness to qualify for state

By ANNIE FOWLER
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — After an outstanding freshman season, Cydney Sanchez's running career has had its ups and downs the past two years, but on Saturday, May 21, the Hermiston senior finally had the success she's been chasing after.

Sanchez placed second in the 1,600 meter at the 3A District 8 Championships with a personal best — and school record — time of 5:16.71 to earn a trip to state.

"I knew I had gotten it," Sanchez said of the record. "There are certain paces, and I was under that. At first I really didn't believe it. It really didn't register with me until 30 minutes after the race. I was pretty much in shock. My main concern was what place I got."

Her previous best was 5:25.70 at the Mid-Columbia Conference Championships the week before.

The previous school record was 5:24.6, set by Jennifer Macias in 2006.

The top three in each event qualified for the 3A State Track and Field Championships at Mt. Tahoma High School in Tacoma, Washington.

"Going into this season, I really didn't have a lot of expectations in mind," Sanchez said. "I just wanted to feel happy running again."

No one was more happy for Sanchez than Hermiston distance coach Troy Blackburn, who has seen her suffer through so much.

"Truthfully, I was always hopeful," Blackburn said of Sanchez qual-



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian, File

Cydney Sanchez of Hermiston competes in the 1,600-meter run April 1, 2021, during a track and field meet against Pasco and Chiawana at Kennison Field, Hermiston. Sanchez finished second and set the school record in the 1,600 at the District 8 Championships on May 22, 2022, in Spokane. Her time was 5:16.71.

ifying for state." I knew it was in her. After the last couple of years, she was ambitious. It's her senior year."

Blackburn said Sanchez managed the race to the very end.

"The third lap, I was starting to get excited," he said. "She hung with them that last lap. She gave it everything. She gave a push at 300 (meters), and I yelled at her at 100."

Sanchez passed the No. 4 runner with 300 meters to go, then she was right behind the No. 2 and No. 3 runners.

"The last 100 meters, all three of them were right together," Blackburn said. "You could tell their legs were wobbling. They gave everything they had until the finish. Cydney wanted it more. No one knew who won until 5 minutes later when they posted the times. She ran with the potential I knew she had. It is one of those races I will remember for a long time."

Macy Marquardt of Kennewick won the race in 5:14.39, followed by

Sanchez (5:16.71), Raegan Borg of Mead (5:16.76) and Charlotte Peder- sen of Mt. Spokane (5:16.80).

"I'm still kind of in shock that I am going to state," Sanchez said.

The good, the bad and the unknown

As a freshman, Sanchez proved she would have a bright future with the Bulldogs.

In track, she ran a 12:07.70 in the 3,200 and finished second at the MCC Championships. She bettered her time by 7 second the following week at the District 8 Championships, clocking a 12:00.09 to finish seventh.

She also ran a 5:35.16 in the 1,600 and finished fourth at the MCC Championships.

In cross-country, she ran a personal best 20:34 over 5,000 meters as a freshman, and bettered that time with a 19:19 her sophomore year, placing seventh at the

3A TRACK AND FIELD CHAMPIONSHIPS

Hermiston qualifiers

Mt. Tahoma High School, May 26-28

Ryker McDonald (100, shot put); Caden Hottman (shot put, discus); Cydney Sanchez (1,600); Jackie Garcia (800); Bailey Young (shot put, discus, javelin).

District 8 Championships and earning a trip to state.

At the 2019 3A state meet, she ran a 19:22.7 and placed 30th.

Things were looking good for track season, until the pandemic prompted its cancellation.

Her junior year, everything got pushed to spring, and that's when things took a turn for the worse. She ran in two races, and her times were not what she had hoped for.

Sanchez started to experience knee problems, then was diagnosed with a thyroid disorder. Then she got mono in June 2021.

"I had mono for seven months and missed most of the cross-country season," she said. "I had COVID right after that, I was lucky that the COVID was not that bad. I have had some lingering effects like fatigue and muscle weakness that prevented me from running."

She qualified for the 2021 state cross-country meet with the rest of the team, but her times were more than a minute slower than her freshman year.

"It was a struggle to finish most of the time," Sanchez said of the races she did run. "It was extremely hard mentally. Running has been an outlet for my mental health. That took a toll on me."

Sanchez started training again in February, but said she never felt good until about a month ago.

"I thought I had my thyroid problem figured out, then some of those resurfaced again. I got it figured out just in time."

Sanchez will have a little company at state in fellow distance

runner Jackie Garcia, who qualified for state in the 800. Garcia is No. 2 in the Hermiston record book in the event with a time of 2:20.33 — about 4 seconds off Angelica Rodriguez's 2010 time of 2:16.81.

"We usually do workouts together," Sanchez said. "She is hard-working and deserves it."

The family that runs together

Sanchez started running cross-country in the seventh grade, but she'd run a few hundred miles before starting school sports.

"I always ran before that with Hurricane Track, and races with my mom (Melody)," Sanchez said. "My mom does 5Ks, or whatever race is going on at the moment. My whole family is runners. It's pretty cool."

Melody (nee Karschnia) and her husband Juan Sanchez both ran cross-country and track at Hermiston High School, as did their son Isaac, who graduated in 2018.

After high school, Cydney Sanchez will attend University of Oregon and plans on being a speech pathologist. She will not run collegiately, but plans to join the school's running club.

As for this week, she's taking it a bit easy. Her state race is scheduled for Thursday, May 26, at 5:15 p.m.

"I'm trying not to go too hard," she said. "I want to feel fresh for race day."

Blackburn said no matter how Sanchez finishes at state, this spring has been a win.

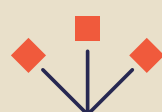
"Anything from here is a cherry on top," he said.

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