

Northwood girls run into CIF finals

By **BRENT SHAVER**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Northwood High's girls cross country team, one of the best squads in Orange County this season, breezed into the CIF Finals with a strong performance at the section prelims Saturday at the Riverside Cross Country Course.

The Timberwolves finished third in their Division 2 heat with 96 points. San Marcos won the heat with 73 points, and Claremont was second with 76 points.

The top eight teams from each of three Division 2 heats moved on to the CIF Finals this Saturday in Riverside.

The normal CIF prelims and finals course at Mount San Antonio College is not available this year because of construction on the campus.

"Our girls team took care of business," Northwood coach Louie Muniz said.

"They all listened and followed directions to race hard the first two miles and then ease off the last



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Freshman Aleks Crampton finishes strong for the Northwood girls cross country team at the CIF prelims.

mile. It was probably toughest for Erika (Adler) to do, as she so badly wants to win every race she enters. Heck, she still had a course personal record backing off a bit."

Adler, who finished second at the Orange County Championships, first at the Pacific Coast League Finals and is one of the top seniors in the state, was second in the heat with a time of 17:15.8. She cruised around the dirt, mud and grass course in Riverside.

Erica Schroeder of San Marcos won the heat in 17:05.5.

Freshman Aleks Crampton was 10th in 18:10.4 as a

strong second runner for the Timberwolves.

Chloe Muller placed 25th in 18:51.6, Sami Murphy was 30th in 18:56.3, and freshman Mary King took 31st in 18:56.4 to round out Northwood's scoring runners.

Micaela O'Connell was 43rd in 19:18.3, and Autumn Clarke finished in 49th in 19:31.9 to also post good times for the Timberwolves.

Muniz and the Timberwolves are now focused on a trip to state.

They will have to finish as one of the top seven teams at Saturday's CIF Finals to advance to Fresno on Thanksgiving weekend.

"It will be extremely tough for our girls team to move on, as Division 2 is loaded," Muniz said. "There are about 10 teams who could make up those seven special spots. Plus all those teams have excellent coaching staffs and historically strong teams."

But Muniz said his team is looking forward to the challenge.

"Our girls are excited to race and have managed to stay grounded through all the seasonal success," he said. "We will try to focus on controlling our emotions and trusting in our months of training. They feel they belong in that special group of seven. Obviously our new athletes this year have made a huge impact, but they are lean-

ing on the salty experience of Sami Murphy, Hailey Villaflor, Chloe Muller and Jasmine Esparza to guide them to the state meet. It will be a true team effort if we make it."

Adler will be in the mix for a CIF individual title along with Schroeder, Kaylee Thompson of Saugus, Haley Herberg of Capistrano Valley and Sara Leonard of Canyon.

"She is the Division 2 individual wild card," Muniz said of Adler, who is in her first full season of competing in cross country. "She is improving each week and with each race learning more about her race pace threshold. Her stock keeps rising after each race. Her main rivals in the division all have experience on their side, which is a huge advantage. Erika is hungry to seize the opportunity to claim a state meet spot. A very special time for a very special athlete."

It wasn't so easy for the Woodbridge girls team to advance. The Warriors earned the eighth and final spot from their Division 2 heat with 201 points, edging Whittier by five points.

Lora Gonzalez ran a tough race and led the way with a 10th-place finish in 17:58.9.

Mariam Masud was 36th in 19:03, and Elizabeth Dahl followed in 19:03.3.

Freshmen Alyze Giffin, who took 56th in 19:46.2, and Sierra Shaver, 64th in 20:04.6, helped push Woodbridge on to Saturday's finals.

University standout sophomore Cecilia Langlois is another to watch at finals.

Running as an individual Friday, Langlois took ninth in a Division 1 heat in a time of 18:26.5 to advance.

Woodbridge's Sierra Shaver is the daughter of Brent Shaver

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