

Hello All Ponderosa CC Staff, Athletes, Families, and Fans,

Yesterday's Saturday Sac-Joaquin Section Cross Country Meet was a HUGE SUCCESS for the Bruins! For all of you that were in attendance and there to witness the greatness and support our Pondo runners... THANK YOU! I am so glad you got to share in the excitement and celebrations. I am ecstatic to announce that not only did our Pondo runners show up and perform, they were at the top of their game and gave personal bests along with setting records! We qualified all 3 of the teams we raced from Subsections onto Sections.

Our day started with the Frosh/Soph boys racing in the Soph Boys Division 3,4,5. From the starting gun our Bruin runners were out in the lead with first year Bruin CC runner, sophomore Dusty Smith charging behind the lead bike. Dusty would never relinquish this position for the rest of the race and crossed the finish line the Section Winner of the race and kept the other 112 runners behind him! This was also a Ponderosa School Record for the fastest 2.1 mile race ever run by a Bruin in 11:30.1 on the Willow Hills Course! The next Bruin runners are listed with their places for Div 3. Our next first year CC runner, freshman, Jacob Judi took 3rd in 12:08.6! Then we had our returning Varsity Runner who was asked by the coaching staff to run down for the last two meets to help our younger boys with a standout win to finish their season! Sophomore Owen Jenkins did just that, sacrificing his personal performance with his Varsity Crew (as he was the only Bruin young man in this race that we did NOT taper or aim to peak on Saturday) crossed the finish line 4th in 12:18.0! Next was another first year Pondo CC runner Austin Jones who took 6th in 12:37.2 who was followed closely by his teammate and also freshman Drew Drinon who took 7th for Div 3 in 12:38.9! Their team of 7 was rounded out with our displacers Saturday Liam Trifiro and Jackson Gilbert. For division 3 our boys had a remarkable team score of 17 (the perfect team score is 15) making them the 1st place team by almost a 50 point difference! This outstanding performance was literally double medal award winning! Each individual racer that crosses the line in the top 10 gets a medal, and then the winning team gets gold medals... thus all of our scorers left the Section Meet with TWO well earned and deserved medals around their neck. Sections is the end of the season for all divisions; Frosh/ Soph and JV, only Varsity squads can try to qualify to move onto state.

Next race of the day was our Varsity Bruin Ladies! I need everyone first to understand that on this team we have one scorer that is a return PHS CC Athlete, every other scorer is a freshman first year girl who had to run Varsity so we could field a team this season. These ladies arrived knowing that we were so proud of them for making Sections but as a team we were a far outside chance to think about moving on.

Our race started as planned with junior Emmy Angelo, last year's Section Winner, out in the front pack with her new freshman teammate and training partner Sadi Angelo. These two young ladies are a force to be recognized and we were confident this dynamic duo could race for possible individual state qualifying spots. These girls stayed directly behind St. Francis' (the #1 ranked girls team in the state) lead runner. Finishing in 2nd place Emmy Angelo set a new school record for the fastest girls time ever run by a Ponderosa Runner for the varsity 3.1 mile hilly tough course @ Willow Hills in

18:28.4! That is an impressive time as the girls she passed on that list have gone on to run collegiately; one @ Cal Berkley and one @ UC Davis! Next across the line was freshman phenom Sadi Angelo who took 3rd in 18:33.5! We were so excited to know that this sealed their state qualifying spots!

However, we did not know what was still to happen by our other 5 Varsity Bruins out on the course. Coaching on the backside of the course there are few spectators and not many other coaches, but it is an important area with some steep hills and rugged terrain. It was there that my "McFarland Moment" happened Saturday. Our freshman, **Avery Wilson** was on her second and final loop past me, looking strong but within eye sight behind some of the teams ranked ahead of us. Our team knows "pac-man" means we need to gobble up and pass the runners or targets in front of us. I had pointed out a few earlier and Avery had surged and passed but with this coaching cue of what jerseys she had to pass next she raced by, over 2miles into her race, and proclaimed, "I got you Coach, no worries I'll get them!" I was dumbfounded as I knew she was running faster than she had all season and was able to communicate an entire sentence while racing as she flew past me and charged the next hill passing these girls.

Avery went on to pass over 15 more girls before the finish line. Our next Coach placement was into the final ½ mile where Coach Wieland saw Avery coming toward him as she was yelling at her teammate in front of her to go! I get chills again tonight, still thinking about it all. Our 3rd Bruin girl through the line was Alex Grunder, the horizon award winner this season, who has fought and raced all season with such heart. She actually finished 28th in 21:18 above where rankings showed her to finish and above what any other school expected her to have.

Avery Wilson finished 36th in 21:46.4 about 15 spots in front of where she should have finished. Right with Avery was her freshman teammate Mabel Best finishing 37th in 21:47.0 to round out our 5 Bruin scorers. Our 6th & 7th runners (displacers) for the Varsity Girls Section team were first year CC runner Lilly Erwin and Senior Monika Alvarez-Romero. It was VERY surreal watching the race finish up with all runners and see our team score holding us in 2nd place only behind the #1 team in the state--St. Francis! 3 teams make it onto state, and we thought we could race to a 5th place team finish, possibly 4th with some great performances, but with our Varsity Girls' grit and winning spirit we left yesterday as the 2nd place, runner up team @ Sections for Div. 3, and we're heading to state!

Last race of the day for Ponderosa was our Varsity Boys, returning Section Champions from 2024! Our boys arrived with laser focus to race hard, win a Section Title, and to continue to think and train for State! The Varsity boys had several teams hunting for them and we carried large targets on our back. However, the Bruin Boys did not disappoint, and Pac-Man raced, running down every white jersey (Oakdale and Beyer ran in white Saturday) that they could. Our varsity boys executed amazing race strategy, smart CC battle tactics, and some awe inspiring home stretch kicks! The team was led to the finish by our Senior Studs; Senior, Grady Morris who crossed the finish line 3rd in 15:57.9 for the 3.1 miles across a hilly difficult terrain! He was VERY closely followed by our Head Captain and Pondo senior Braden Himley who took 4th in

15:58.1. Next in was junior & captain Devin Maldonado who took 9th in 16:19.4! These 3 boys took individual medals! Our 4th runner in was our 1st year CC runner and sophomore, Weston Lauer in 17:18.8! Our last scorer was sophomore Jacob Arthur in 17:29.0. The 6th & 7th place finishers for Pondo were senior Captain Colby Woodward and junior Captain Gavin Scowcroft. The Bruin Varsity Boys finished with a team score of 61 winning a repeat back to back Section title and taking them to a state berth!

The day was magical for Ponderosa with every competing athlete leaving with a medal and 10 of our athletes double medals around their neck! To have a team that is so young and so new I am so proud of them for their hard work, dedication, and trust in the training plans! It is the first time in my coaching history of CC to be taking a full boys and a full girls team to state in the same season! Thank you to everyone for your support and the season is not done! You can view official Section results [here](#). I have also sent out post race individual stat emails earlier this evening.

Next week, starting tomorrow, I encourage all CC Athletes that are finished for this 2025 CC season to begin their mandatory 2 week break from running! However if anyone plans on doing a Turkey Trot or have signed up for some other kind of fun run please come check with coaches and we can slot your break differently. We encourage cross training, strength, stretching, biking, swimming, etc. over the two weeks... just NO RUNNING! Then we will start our winter training with any that are NOT doing a winter sport after their two weeks off. We also need **all uniforms, warm-ups and any other team issued gear returned and checked in with the coaching staff.** This can be done before school, @ lunch, after school or at Flex this week @ Thursday's CC Flex. Turning in gear MUST be done with a coach as we have to check you off of the spreadsheet so you do NOT incur a school fine. Please be sure all clothing items being returned have been laundered and warmups are back in their black bags they were issued in, ALL WARM-UPS were issued in a black drawstring bag for the jacket and one for the pants.

PLEASE think about ordering your official team photos from Coach Aedan Ming who not only did our photosession and editing of all pics but sells these pictures and puts all monies back into the PHS T&F program! You can view and order your pictures using this link [here](#).

I will be sending home more information about the state meet, traveling for the state meet, and Thanksgiving week training times / plans early this week (Monday or Tuesday).

I will have the Section banner and plaque in P-1 this week for any athletes that didn't get their picture moment!

Coach Karen Norwood