

North Coast Section Division 1 Girls

2014 Preview & Rankings

To bring a non-EBAL perspective...

Disclaimer(s): Though the age of information and the Internet have made finding results and compiling data easier (thank you to Campolindo, Amador Valley, Monte Vista, and most of all, Cross Country Express!), I am still limited by what I can find. Not everything is complete. No information regarding transfers and freshmen is taken into consideration since I have no clue. Also, I'm not a teacher like Ozzie. I am a recent college graduate in the sciences and I write like one too (and I love bad puns).

Where we left off...After 2013's war, 2014 has a lot to live up to. A miniscule 11 points separated the top 4 teams at NCS. Christine Bayliss broke away on the hill for the title to give her San Ramon Valley squad an ace that they ended up needing badly. In the end, the pileup of runners from the top teams made it close (although the electronic scoreboard helped). Monte Vista got just enough from each spot to take the title home for the Mustangs. San Ramon Valley's top 3 led the way for the Wolves to nab the final state qualifying team spot. Amador Valley and Granada stayed home despite races that would have taken them to state most years and Liberty rounded out the top 5.

Overview: The team title remains the same, with EBAL schools the favorites for the team spots. Granada moves to Division 2 and creates a void many teams will vie to fill. A still-young and dangerous Liberty team lurks. In the individual battle, defending champion Christine Bayliss returns for her senior year and her third NCS individual title. But Brooke Starn's monster track season (4:53, NCS 1600 Champion, 10:36 to win the Arcadia Seeded heat) has her on the upswing. A top 10 finish has been required to receive an individual state qualifying spot in recent years and that trend looks to continue with last year's #7-12 runners all returning. A quick summary is directly below. The juicy details are after that. Hope you enjoy and remember, this is all just one man's opinion!

Team Rankings:

1. Monte Vista – Top to bottom, very strong. But health of 4-7 is key to season-long strength
2. Amador Valley – Tight group can take team far if track speed translates. 8-ball says it will for Dons
3. Liberty – Top 3 will carry them. Who else develops and meets potential to be seen
4. San Ramon Valley – Experience is there plus the Bayliss ace. But depth and health big concerns.
5. Dougherty Valley – Best top 2 and best potential newcomers of teams left, but commitment issues
6. Mission San Jose – Return 5 and mostly improved in track, but lost #1 and #3 from last year
7. Castro Valley – Solid top 4, but lost very low-stick and usual pool of talent drying up
8. James Logan – Size and talent in track, but XC commitment and aerobic strength questionable
9. Heritage – Could move up or down based on who comes back, who joins, and who trained
10. Berkeley – Newfound commitment may mark rise of a new era. But still in early stages.

Individual Rankings:

1. Brooke Starn – Monte Vista
2. Christine Bayliss – San Ramon Valley
3. Kai Bohannon – Liberty
4. Meredith Corda – Monte Vista
5. Emily Wylie – Liberty
6. Melodie Leroudier – Amador Valley
7. Alexandria Tucker – Dougherty Valley
8. Christy Hammill – San Ramon Valley

9. Annaka Green – Amador Valley
10. Jesse Hardman - Liberty

Can anyone run the Mustangs down? As always, we start with the incumbent. To me, it looks like *Monte Vista* somehow got stronger, yes? Losing only one, the team reloads easily. It starts with the low stick, junior **Brooke Starn** (17:54, 3rd NCS; 17:56, 15th state), and having that virtually automatic top runner. But most teams would love to have sophomore **Meredith Corda** (18:21, 7th NCS; 20:52, 139th state) leading the way, as she is the #3 returner from last year. Corda dropped a 5:08 1600 and a strong 11:52 in the 3200. Junior **Madison Jeha** (18:58, 19th NCS, 19:57, 108th state) returns after running 5:50/12:45 and has the experience of running with the top group. The real mover in this lineup could be sophomore **Catherine Kiser** (19:14, 25th last year), who ran 19:50 (103rd place) for the #3 slot at state and then a 5:37 1600 early on and ran 12:21 for 3200 at EBAL Championships. She also dabbled in the 300 Hurdles, showing her athleticism. If there is one place the Mustangs could be tripped, it is at #5 (gotta nitpick somewhere). While they historically have had a deep pool of similarly talented runners to draw upon, they have struggled to stay healthy by the end of the season. Junior **Emily Gines** (19:51, 40th NCS; 20:53, 140th state) returns after running 5:57. Her PRs of 5:42 and 12:43 speak more to her ability. Last year's #7, senior **Caroline Carey** (19:56, 42nd last year), returns and was #5 at state with a 20:49 (138th place) and has a 5:37 1600 PR. So does, presumably junior **Elana Lim**, who when healthy has PRs of 5:29 and 11:33. Lim did run 5:36 and 11:52 this past season as well. Junior **Megan McCabe** (2:25/5:36) could be another breakout runner for this team. The front-end talent combined with the strong back-end makes the Mustangs a favorite again this year to continue Coach Mike Davis's newest dynasty.

The Challengers (in alphabetical order)

Amador Valley – After winning EBAL, it must have been heartbreaking for these ladies to finish third at NCS. They return 4 of their top 5 and the youngsters really stepped up in track. The Dons run well as a pack and are led by junior **Melodie Leroudier** (18:26, 10th last year) after a fine track season (5:21/11:24). What ought to scare everyone is what lies behind her. The half mile star **Annaka Green** (18:56, 17th last year) ran a blazing 2:17 to come in 5th at NCS MOC. Green also ran a 5:24 for 1600. Another half miler is developing in sophomore **Karly Laffer** (2:21/5:34), ran 19:05 for 21st last year. Rising senior **Smita Nalluri** (19:14, 26th last year) showed great aerobic strength running 5:27 and 11:26 this track season. While the depth of the Dons is unquestioned, who rises up is the question. **Abbie O'Brien** and **Jennifer D'Addabbo** ran 5:30/12:18 and 5:34/12:41 respectively and have the inside track. A slew of juniors (**Ysabel Thorn**, **Cara Ingram**, **Nicole Tsuno**, **Kayla Schroeder**, **Maura Carrick**, and **Bhavya Rhamireddi**) who ran sub-5:55 and/or sub-13:30 could rise up. In the past, coach Jason Oswalt and staff have developed these types of runners to become big contributors. And I would bet on them doing it again to be in the running for one of the top two team spots.

Berkeley – Let's get this out of the way first – the Abdos are not coming back. But things are looking up, as the Yellow Jackets return 6 of 7 and all six ran track (this is a big deal for us). Junior **Rachel Barcklay** (20:27, 52nd last year) broke out last year, with a 96 second improvement at Hayward and then clocked 2:33/5:47 on the oval. Junior **Karin Uzawa** pushed to a 20:42 at the Farmer Invite, but an ankle injury kept her from lowering that time (20:58, 63rd at NCS). She came back to run 5:51/13:15 in track. Sophomore **Amelia Huster** (20:43, 59th last year, 2:43/6:13) can make a big jump with her first summer of training. Sophomore **Mira Gordon** (21:09 at WACC Finals, 21:16, 74th at NCS) focused on sprints and hurdles during track, but should combine her newfound speed and efficiency with an excellent aerobic base. **Chaia Wyatt** (21:24, 79th last year, 6:17/13:49) and **Claire Haug** (21:41 at WACC Finals,

22:49 at NCS, 105th last year, 6:08/13:29) need to build on their solid track seasons if this team wants to do anything, though. Not much else lies beneath the cupboard for the Jackets. After years of new faces leaving as soon as they appear, this team has finally found some consistency. But right now, Berkeley doesn't have nearly enough upfront to be considered in the discussion for top 5 even.

Castro Valley - Always one of the largest teams in NCS, the Trojans are led by senior **Emma Armstrong** (19:12, 23rd last year) who ran 5:27 and 11:38 during track. The pair of junior **Arianna Alfaro** (19:49, 37th last year) and senior **Alexandria Embody** (19:49, 38th last year) has run together for the past two years. While Alfaro put down a 2:32 800, her PR is 2:25 from freshman year. Embody has not run track since 2012 and started out slowly last year as she built strength. The team hopes she can do the same this year to carry her and Alfaro. Junior **Sarah Fung** (20:53, 61st last year) could be a boon to the team after breaking through with a 5:44/12:23 track season. Sophomore **Maiya Hutchinson** showed her speed with a 63.96 400 and 2:33 800 after coming in 9th F/S at the WACC Cross Country Championships. Despite being so big, the depth seems to be lacking this year. The remaining girls did not run a race longer than an 800 in track or have not run cross country. Junior **Maria Salter** (2:32) excelled in mid-distance and pole vault. Sophomore **Sarah Nossier** ran 5:54 for 1600, but did not run cross country last year. The Trojans need to continue to develop these young ladies as well as get some key newcomers to help support Armstrong if they want to return to their former glory of NCS titles past.

Dougherty Valley – Definitely one of the scariest teams in Division 1. The fast-rising school was in Division 4 just 5 years ago (and won the D4 title that year). Junior **Alexandria Tucker** (18:39, 14th last year) leads the Wildcats after a solid 5:21/11:56 track season. Junior **Helen Guo** (18:58, 18th last year) exploded for a huge 2:23 at Tri-Valley. Junior **Alexandria Peregrino** (21:18, 76th last year) also comes back after showing excellent speed with a 62.89 400 in her first year of track. Senior **Annie Zhang** (23:06, 107th last year) returns. But the direction of DV depends on a couple of girls running cross country who didn't last year. The strong junior class could make this a fantastic four if **Priya Ravi** and her 5:42 1600 come along. But this trend is two years long. A girl I think could be a major part of the team is sophomore **Kayla Jindrich** (5:47 1600), who also did not run cross country last year. Senior **Joyce Xu** (21:47, 89th last year) will need to improve for this team to go anywhere and she may have taken that step by running track for the first time (2:59 800/6:21 1600). The next options for this team were all very inconsistent in track and did not run cross country last year. **Kelly Wong** (2:50/6:21/13:43), **Sarah Chen Jung** (6:18), and **Kendalia Spencer** (7:01/13:01) are the main candidates to be varsity contributors. The best thing for DV would be to get the word out about how good this program is at the quickly growing school because this is just the beginning.

Heritage – Last year's core trio of junior **Delaney Sparling** (19:57, 43rd last year), senior **Annjellica Nubla** (20:10, 48th last year), and junior **Tori Bryan** (20:26, 51st last year) all return. Although Nubla improved her 800 PR by 2 seconds to 2:23, she seemingly struggled to a 6:11 1600. Her PR is 5:31 from freshman year. Neither Sparling nor Bryan had results for track. One to watch is **Skyler Duignan**. The sophomore had a decent cross country season, but then broke through to run 5:38/12:04 during track. Senior **Amanda Pedersen** returns with a new 5:51 1600 PR. **Sydney Lim** (22:18, 99th last year) ran well in track to show steps to improvement (2:44/5:54). **Larena Toralba** (22:52, 106th last year) also returns after running 2:44/5:56/13:34, none of which are PRs. Like many teams, the Patriots are going to need some girls who only ran half-years to step up. Bryan and Sparling first and foremost, but a couple girls from track may come to the fall sport. The best among them is **Brianna Pecknold**, who ran 2:28/5:19 as a freshman. **Maddie Vanderheid-Nye**, another sophomore, ran 2:34/5:46 and could give them a boost. The Patriots have a lot of talent to draw upon, but getting that commitment is key.

James Logan – The biggest school in NCS keeps getting talent to come out. A huge class of 2016 is rising up for the Colts and leading the charge is **Alexandra Newsom** (19:36, 34th last year) who blitzed to a 5:16 at Bay Shore and 11:51 at MVAL Championships. **Yanet Paredes** (21:04, 66th last year) ran to strong 2:34/5:40 times, both at MVAL Championships. **Karina Phan** (21:34, 83rd last year) had a nice track season running 2:38/5:55/13:43. **Leslie Ramirez** did the same with a 2:36/5:40 double despite not running cross country. **Karen Manalac** (21:26, 80th last year) served up a 2:43/6:11 double at MVAL Championships as well. Rising senior **Ashley Chang** showed strong aerobic capability with a 12:55 3200 after a 6:12 and 2:50, all at MVAL Championships. But Chang has never run cross country for the Colts. Girls like sophomore **Alyssa Kwong** (2:44/6:23) and junior **Vien Nguyen** (2:39/6:35) could be next in line for this team. Coach Lee Webb knows how to coach, as seen by what the boys did last year. But the girls need to train more consistently if they want to match that effort.

Liberty – Anyone looking past the EBAL scrum noticed Liberty. Returning the top 6 from a top 5 squad is good enough to contend. But Liberty has the low sticks to stake their claim to a title, in **Kai Bohannon** (18:24, 9th NCS; 19:07, 91st state) and **Emily Wylie** (18:22, 8th NCS; 19:21, 104th state) who both qualified to state as individuals last year. The sophomore Bohannon stuck to the longer distances, running 2:28/5:06/11:33 while the junior Wylie dabbled in the shorter distances with a 61.99 400 and 2:20 800. Wylie ran a 5:19/12:17 double at BVAL Championships as well. The best #3 returner belongs to the Lions and sophomore **Jesse Hardman** (18:48, 15th last year) showed her talent with a 2:27/5:45/13:08 track season. The #4 and #5 runners last year were sophomores **Ashlyn Adams** (19:57, 45th last year) and **Rita Landski** (20:36, 57th last year), but neither had results for track. Last year's #6, sophomore **Bailey Dow** (21:10, 72nd last year), did though with a 2:48/6:04/13:35 all done at dual meets. The possibilities for varsity contributors here are astounding. Sophomore **Miranda Truhe** was the best with a 2:36/5:56/13:01 combination. **Estrella Torres** (2:47/6:05) showed excellent improvement in track while **Miriam Perez**, **Isabella Carrera**, and **Shireen Vossoughi** could all find themselves as key components to the Lions success. The competition for #7 on this team (and potentially higher) should create good depth for this team and raise the overall level of the Lions to contending for a state spot.

Mission San Jose – Despite losing 2 of their top 3, the Warriors could be stronger than ever next year. The pack margin of this team looks to be very tight, led by junior **Elizabeth Hu** (19:19, 28th last year) who ran 5:53/12:50, but owns PRs of 5:42 and 11:57. **Mavis Zeng** (20:23, 50th last year) slashed her PRs down to 2:44 and 5:48. **Minji Koo** (21:00, 64th last year) only ran 5:52 (PR is 5:50) in the 1600, but chopped off a lot of time with a 12:37 3200. Sophomore **Lydia Chew** (21:07, 68th last year) looks ready to break out after laying 2:43/5:47/12:27 times on the track. What make MSJ a threat is **Adviti Atluri** (21:17, 75th last year) and her big track season where she hit 2:30/5:33 (with a solid 12:55 as well). Unfortunately beyond that, the talent pool is a little dry. Perhaps **Ilhaam Burny** (2:50/6:14/12:55) comes out for cross country for the first time after switching to distance in track. Perhaps **Phoebe Hsu** (2:47 800) continues to improve. Perhaps they get a new class of freshmen to replenish the reserves. The Warriors are going through a shift and they have the talent to survive, but if they want to excel they need to move the pack up and bring some others along.

San Ramon Valley – Despite graduating 4 from last year's state qualifying team, the Wolves return a pack of veterans trying to return to the state meet. Defending individual champion **Christine Bayliss** (17:30, 1st NCS; 18:33, 31st state) has the experience of winning, winning last year and also in Division 2 in 2011. With solid times of 2:31/5:13/11:13, she is still the leader. Based on previous years she did get slower, but this has been a trend for her and she won last year. No matter what, she'll be a low scorer for the team. Senior **Christy Hammill** (18:34, 12th NCS; 19:41, 96th state) cut her PRs down to 2:34/5:33/11:51 in track. Senior **Grace Kuester** (21:09, 71st NCS; 22:04, 151st state) is the only other returning varsity runner from last year and ran 6:12/13:19 in track. Senior **Regan Leach** ran 2:34/5:55,

but struggled with injuries (I assume based on results) all year. Senior **Kyra Knox** looks to be next in line after running 2:35/6:07 and a solid cross country season. Sophomore **McKenna Jackson** came in 2nd at EBAL F/S in cross country, but had no track results. 800 meter star **Kaitlyn Elkem** probably won't do cross country for the first time in her senior season, which is a shame. Other varsity candidates are sophomores **Bridget Cooke** (6:20/13:28) and **Jessica Mendez** (6:11 1600). The key for SRV is to stay healthy because we know they can develop runners and are always up in the front when we convene at Hayward.