

Barrientos wins state 1,600 title

■ Girls: Roseby, Stone also capture championships.

BY DARREN SABEDRA
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SACRAMENTO — As she ran around the final turn and the finish line came into focus in the girls 1,600 meters, Alejandra Barrientos knew it was simply a matter of time. There was no way the state championship was going to slip away now.



Barrientos

Just to be sure, the San Lorenzo Valley High sophomore glanced back, as she had done several times after taking the lead with 300 meters to go.

It was obvious reigning state champion Sara Bei of Montgomery in Santa Rosa wasn't going to make a late charge, and Barrientos contin-

ued her pace as the crowd of 16,175 at Hughes Stadium roared.

Barrientos, who hadn't even competed in distance running a year ago, completed her remarkable journey, winning the state championship Saturday in 4 minutes, 45.02 seconds, the fastest time in the nation this season.

Bei took second in 4:46.71, the nation's second-best time. Angela Sanchez of Capuchino, the runner-up to Barrientos at the Central Coast Section championships, finished third in 4:52.87.

"I felt tired," Barrientos said after the awards ceremony. "But I just kept telling myself to give a little more, give a little more. I heard people screaming, and I saw the finish line. I kept telling myself, 'There it is. You keep getting closer to a state championship. Keep going harder and harder.' If I just did all that, I could pull myself through it."

Barrientos' victory was one of several highlights for CCS athletes.

Monterey junior Sani Roseby, a three-time state-meet qualifier, won the long jump with a leap of 19 feet,

8¾ inches, and she placed second in the 100 and fourth in the 200. Her time in the 100 (11.42) ranks second in the nation behind champion Tania Woods of Skyline in Oakland, who clocked an 11.41.

Kim Stone of York capped her career by winning the high jump at 5-9, the best mark she has posted since her sophomore season.

In the 1,600, Barrientos ran what her coach, Rob Collins, called a perfect race. Though she wasn't the pacesetter during the middle of the race, as she typically is, Barrientos hit each split in her plan. She ran the first lap in 69 seconds, completed 800 meters in 2:24 and 1,200 meters in 3:38.

"Everything worked out perfect to the point for us," Collins said.

With 400 meters left, Barrientos and Bei were even. Bei, who defeated Barrientos in their only previous meeting, surged into the lead as she made the turn toward the back stretch. But with 300 meters to go, Barrientos made the move that would end with her arms raised at the finish line. She passed Bei and

then started to pull away with about 80 meters left.

"It's like a dream come true," said Barrientos, whose previous best time was 4:47.94, set at the Arcadia Invitational in April. "I have gone through so many ups and downs, times when I didn't want to run anymore, when my body just hurt so bad. I thought is this worth it? I was thinking, I'm killing myself. What if I don't even get this state championship? But today was just so focused. With what I had to do, I am just incredibly satisfied. Things couldn't be better right now."

Roseby also was satisfied, posting the winning mark in the long jump in the fifth of six rounds for her first state championship.

"The hard part was just waiting to see if that jump would hold up," Roseby said.

When it was clear the mark would stand, she said, "Thank you Jesus. I was so happy."

Stone's winning mark came on her second attempt at that height.

"It's the pinnacle," Stone said. "What more could I want? In high school, this is what it's all about."

Challenge awaits Barrientos

■ Girls: Defending 1,600-meter champion serves notice by posting top qualifying time.

BY DARREN SABEDRA
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SACRAMENTO — One would expect Alejandra Barrientos to have a psychological advantage in the girls 1,600 meter final today at the state track and field championships. The San Lorenzo Valley High sophomore hasn't lost in two months, and no one in the field has posted a faster time this season.

But if Barrientos has an edge, it isn't much of one.

Sara Bei of Montgomery in Santa Rosa, the reigning state champion and the only runner to beat Barrientos this season, showed Friday night that she won't relinquish her title without a fight. The sophomore won the second of two heats at Hughes Stadium with a time of 4:56.88, the day's best mark. Barrientos won her heat in 4:57.45.

If that was reason for concern, Barrientos didn't show it. She explained that all she wanted to do Friday was run fast enough to win her heat. Before she left, she watched Bei put on a late kick to win her heat.

"She starts out pretty slow and then takes it way up," Barrientos said. "I know that in the beginning (today), I shouldn't have a problem with her being right there with me."

"But I just know that if it comes down to the last lap and we're still right there, I'll give it the strongest kick I possibly can, and hopefully that will be

enough to win this. I'm not afraid of how much I'm hurting. No matter how much pain I'm in, I'm going to do whatever I can."

There were few surprises Friday among the Central Coast Section's girls entrants.

Sani Roseby of Monterey advanced in the 100, 200 and long jump. Tinishia Johnson of Mitty advanced in the triple jump and long jump. Latoya Phillips of Mitty moved on in the 100 hurdles, and Mitty's 400 relay team qualified for today's final.

But one of today's marquee events figures to be the 1,600.

Angela Sanchez of Capuchino, who finished second to Barrientos at the CCS championships last week and third in Bei's heat Friday, said the race might come down to experience.

"Sara has more experience," Sanchez said. "I think she'll use that to her advantage."

Bei isn't sure what to expect because she is unfamiliar with Barrientos' style. She also claims she hasn't run in a fast-paced 1,600 this season. Bei, whose best time of the season (4:52.28) came indoors, considers herself an underdog.

"I kind of like the role of coming in that way," she said. "You don't have as much pressure. The pressure comes from yourself."

Bei beat Barrientos at the Stanford Invitational in March with a time of 4:53.99 in the mile. Barrientos finished third in 5:00.42 but hasn't faded in big meets since. She posted the state's top time of 4:47.94 at the Arcadia Invitational in April and has consistently run near 4:50. Bei, who will also attempt to defend her state title in the 3,200, didn't run at Arcadia because she was on a church retreat in Mexico.

"I don't think, in the mile, I have been in a great race the whole year," she said. "None of them have

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— Alejandra Barrientos

gone out under 80 seconds the first lap. That's such a slow start."

By contrast, Barrientos ran the first lap last week at the CCS championships in 64.7 seconds and ran the first lap Friday in 69 seconds.

Barrientos aggravated a back injury Friday but said she will be fine today. She said she suffered the injury weeks ago. In the triple jump, Mitty's Johnson qualified third with a leap of 38-9½. She said it will take 40 feet to win today.

"There are a lot of talented girls out there," Johnson said.

Johnson said she was more nervous Friday than at any other meet in her career. She took fifth at the state meet last season.

"I know I have a better chance to do well," she said. "I was kind of nervous about that."

In the 100, Roseby posted her best legal mark of the season, 11.59. She won the CCS title in a wind-aided 11.50.

"I plan on it being faster tomorrow," Roseby said.

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