



New Mexico Activities Association

Student-Athlete Spotlight

Running keeps Baldwin on Track

By Jason Groves

Renee Baldwin has a full plate. But the Oñate High School junior wouldn't have it any other way.

In addition to pacing the Oñate girls' cross country team to six wins in six meets this fall, she also participates in color guard and runs track in the spring.

By the way, she is a 3.8 grade point average student with goals to pursue a medical degree in college. As she moves on to her senior year next year, she said she may drop color guard her senior year to focus on academics, but she's making the most of her junior year so far.

"Cross country is probably more physically demanding because I'm also in marching band and, I'm not going to lie, both are really hard," Baldwin said. "I have to manage my time, eat well, sleep well and stay hydrated. I think it's more demanding because I'm doing two sports in that season."

Baldwin is relatively new to running and she started color guard in middle school.

"I saw them perform in middle school and thought it was cool so I started doing it and I like it," Baldwin said. "There are times when I don't know if I can keep doing both but I know it will make me stronger in the end. I like that challenge."

Baldwin started competing as an eighth grader at Sierra Middle School, where she couldn't keep up with many girls, including current Oñate teammates Amerhyst Aguirre and senior Megan Aguilera.

"I've always loved running but I didn't start off as a good runner. I always enjoyed the accomplishment that you feel after you run," Baldwin said. "I ran the mile in the eighth grade and I got fifth place and I barely made it. All of those girls were so fast in middle school and I wanted to get to their level. I worked hard and I got there."

Baldwin has won five of her first six cross country races this season and she finished second in the other race. She has posted personal best times this season in the 5K (18:46:00), the three-mile (18:54.97) and the two-mile (11:42.81).

Her second place finish came at the 29-team Rob Winter Classic, where she finished the 5K course in her personal best time of 18:46:00, which was 40 seconds off the pace and behind Belen's Arena Lewis.

"She is still getting better every week and is able to remain on top as well and that is a very difficult thing to do," said David Nuñez, who coaches cross country and track and field at OHS. "We are hoping that she can maintain that level of competition clear up through district and state."

"She is a good student of the sport. She has taken a lot of her experiences in racing and learned from them. She will take something that didn't go well and use those as a means of learning from them and creating a better race plan for the next time out. A lot of her success



comes from mindset."

Baldwin believes the Knights can make some noise in this year's state meet in Rio Rancho.

"I think we can place really well in cross country and track at state," Baldwin said. "Coach Nuñez knows when to push us hard and let us rest. If we help each other push through, I think we have a chance to do some great things."

Baldwin placed fifth individually last year as a sophomore in the Class 6A state track meet in the 1,600 meters and the 3,200 meters.

"She took a huge leap from the year before," Nuñez said. "She went from being a qualifier at the district level to qualifying by time in both events and placing in the Top 5 in those events with very good times. It's almost like she has carried it over into her cross country season at a high level that has been a blessing to our team."

Baldwin said she favors cross country but the two different disciplines work well together.

"Track is more sprinting and speed and cross country is more endurance because of the hill running and sand that you have to run through," she said. "Track is more difficult for me because my speed isn't the best. I depend on endurance to get me through a race."