

TRACK AND FIELD: Cepero meet highlighted with laughter and fun



Jacob Ford|Odessa American

Zayden Alvarez, 4, competes in the Tiny Tots race at 14th annual Dr. Daniel Cepero Memorial Track and Field meet Saturday at Ratliff Stadium.

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By Peter Dindinger pdindinger@oaoa.com

Rain did not dampen the spirits of the competitors on Day 2 of the 14th annual Dr. Daniel Cepero Memorial Track and Field meet

Saturday morning at Ratliff Stadium.

After being postponed on Day 1 due to the rain, the meet went full speed ahead on Day 2.

Three athletes were awarded \$1,000 scholarships. Trevor Gonzalez, a recent Midland Lee grad who will be attending University of the Southwest in Hobbs, N.M., won the Dr. and Mrs. Ralph Cepero scholarship.

Midland High grad Sametria Smith, who captured a silver medal at the state meet in Austin, was awarded the Walgreens scholarship. Smith will be attending New Mexico Junior College.

The third and final recipient was Bailey Kinney of San Angelo Central. Kinney won the Pete and Lisa Hebler scholarship. She signed with Stephen F. Austin University in April.

One constant theme throughout the meet, despite the hot and humid conditions, was kids having fun. Smiles weren't scarce at the event.

"That was my husband's motto — to run and have fun at it," Susan Cepero said. "I'm just so thankful and pleased that the Neboh's have carried on my husband's name, our name.

"Both of our kids ran with their kids. I know how important these scholarships are. My kids went to college and I know every bit helps."

Smith, who ran unattached, posted a mark of 17 feet, 7.25 inches in the long jump competition. Smith's mark at the state was 20-4.25, which ranked seventh in the nation, according to athletic.net.

Track has opened a lot of doors for Smith. She has a lot of plans for her future.

“It means a lot to me because I’m struggling now,” Smith said. “This money will help go towards buying a new laptop. I’ve grown up on this track.

“I’ve been running track for 10 years, so it means a lot. This is like my last official summer track meet running with them. I plan on going to a DI college. I’m looking at Georgia and LSU right now. I’m hopefully going pro after that.”

Gonzalez competed with Farris Tall City Christian Track Club. He took third in the long jump with a mark of 16-5.75. He plans on majoring in business management.

“It means a lot to me. Just coming out here and running, doing what I love and also getting the opportunity to continue my education, continue running — it’s all because of God, coach (Farris) Strambler and my family, and the team,” Gonzalez said. “They just pushed me and I came out here and showed them that I greatly appreciate them. I hope I can go on and do great things for them.”

Walgreens district manager for the Midland-Odessa area, Donn Renner, believes the event is big for children. It helps not only keep kids active, but it gives them something to strive for and build off of.

“I think it’s a great thing just being able to contribute to different events in the community, and really become part of the community,” Renner said. “We all have kids and family that are here and work and live in this area. It’s just great to come out and be able to donate to something that will help children improve their lives and get on to college.

“I think it’s a very important event for Odessa. It really brings the kids together. It gives them something fun to do. It helps them stay healthy, stay out of trouble, gives them some goals, helps them get through school and really just helps them achieve at life.”

The event brings families and friends together, and for one weekend it enlightens the whole track community.

“It’s been fantastic. It’s great to see the little kids run. It’s really impressive to see the big kids run,” Cepero said. “Everything’s been going smooth. Everybody’s happy, and that’s what’s nice about this. Everybody is excited for each other and very joyful.

“A lot of these children were my husband’s patients, and its fun to see them grow up. I know everybody loved my husband as a pediatrician and a person, too. It’s very meaningful for everybody.”