



Maricopa coach trains up track athletes for Junior Olympics

By **Kyle Norby** - Aug 26, 2019



West Coast Striders athletes Zanaa Ramirez and Gianna Chavez with coach Corey Nelson at Junior Olympics. Submitted

Maricopa has produced numerous youth athletes in multiple sports, with many records being broken and medals won for track and field in the past few years.

When speaking to high school and club coach Corey Nelson, it's obvious his passion for the sport is a prominent part of his career.

"This will be my third year. I started off as an assistant coach with the [Maricopa High School] track program, handling the sprints and relays," Nelson explained. "Maricopa is a cesspool of athletes."

This summer, Nelson and his track club, West Coast Striders, took two Maricopans to compete in the USATF Hershey Junior Olympics Track and Field Championships. Maricopa High School senior Zanaa Ramirez and Legacy Traditional fifth-grader Gianna Chavez ran for the women 17-18 bracket and girls 11-12 bracket, respectively.

"They qualified for what we call Junior Olympics Region 10, which consists of certain states on the West Coast," Nelson said. "They then take a limited number of qualifiers there, and they qualify for the Junior Olympics national championships and that involves the entire country."

Both girls had strong results at the event, becoming Maricopa's first two nationally ranked youth athletes in track:



800-meter run, women 17-18

Zanaa Ramirez 32nd place, 2:30.08 (qualified with time of 2:36.43)

800-meter run, girls 11-12

Gianna Chavez 19th place, 2:34.35 (previous 2:35.30)

1500-meter run, girls 11-12

Gianna Chavez 10th place, 5:07.56 (previous 5:14.25)

When asked how he prepares for these complex championships, Nelson said consistency and technique make the athlete.

“What we did was work on our speed and worked on a lot of technique. Most importantly diet, doing the right things off the track as well as on it,” Nelson said.

Nelson began his track career late into his junior year of high school. After competing in college and professionally, he has retired to coaching mostly, though he has also competed with West Coast Striders, winning Masters 60-meters at the USATF Arizona Indoor Classic. Being able to pass on a wealth of knowledge and firsthand experience has proved to be the backbone of his Club and coaching style.

He is now an assistant coach for the Sequoia Pathway varsity football team.

“If you’re not having fun with it, then you’re probably not going to be successful,” Nelson said. “One thing about track is not many people go undefeated. So, you know, watching them learn from it, watching them excel, be better people overall from the sport of track and field is always fun to watch.”

Whether it is training or just having a good time before completion, both are key components in the track and field experience.
