



[October 03, 2006]

A real runner's runner: Roy Chernock unretired to coach Juliana Tabares.

(South Florida Sun-Sentinel (KRT) Via Thomson Dialog NewsEdge) Oct. 3--WELLINGTON -- Juliana Tabares of Palm Beach Central was 11 years old when she saw her first road race.

Tabares tagged along with her father, Oscar, a top age-group runner, and she ended up entering the kids' race.

"I ran a kiddie race for 100 meters and won a little medal," Tabares said. "I got all excited and started running with my dad after that. Now he gets really excited about me."

Six years later, the 17-year-old junior from West Palm Beach is one of the top cross-country runners in the county.

During the summers, training alongside former high school runner Danielle Bradley (King's Academy) was inspiring for Tabares. She saw where hard work and discipline can take you. This past summer she trained at the Jim Ryun Running Camp in Colorado.

But the biggest turning point in her running came when veteran coach Roy Chernock was talked out of retirement by a parent and hired at Palm Beach Central to coach cross country and track.

One of the most respected coaches in the nation, Chernock turned John I. Leonard's program into a county champion after four runner-up finishes and started the program at Seminole Ridge with 10 novices before deciding to retire at 78.

The New York University Hall of Famer has coached the sport for 56 years, including stints at William & Mary (1977-90) and U.S. national track team in international competitions. He was a three-time gold medalist in track at the 1950 Maccabiah Games.

"I was excited because I knew I had one really good athlete to work with and that was Juliana," said Chernock, who coached her at the start of her freshman year at John I. Leonard before she transferred.

Tabares said she's glad his retirement lasted only two days, as "He knows his stuff," Tabares said. "I know how lucky I am to have him as a coach. He has

everything planned down to the last mile of workouts. He doesn't yell. I really like him."

Her career-best time is 19 minutes and 58 seconds for 3.1 miles at Palm Beach Gardens. Her other top times are 20:05 and 20:10 this season. Last year she qualified for her first state cross country meet and ran a season-best was 21:32.

"I would like to get back to state and do better," Tabares said.

The 5-foot-3 Tabares ran 20:10 last Friday to win the girls' individual title at the John I. Leonard Invitational on a challenging course at Okeeheelee Park. It was her second invitational victory.

Tabares makes good grades and still has time to enjoy her high school life that includes lots of dancing at Ambar Restaurante, a popular Spanish hangout, and listening to Aventura and Shakira.

Born in Colombia, Tabares, her parents and older sister Marcela, 19, moved to South Florida when Juliana was 6. On occasion, she returns to Colombia during the summer and runs with her father in the mountains.

"I knew it would only be a matter of time before she caught up to me and passed me," said Oscar Tabares, who wakes up at 5 in the morning to run before work. "I am very happy she has improved and loves it."

Sharon Robb can be reached at srobb@sun-sentinel.com.

Copyright (c) 2006, South Florida Sun-Sentinel

Distributed by McClatchy-Tribune Business News.

For reprints, email tmsreprints@permissionsgroup.com, call 800-374-7985 or 847-635-6550, send a fax to 847-635-6968, or write to The Permissions Group Inc., 1247 Milwaukee Ave., Suite 303, Glenview, IL 60025, USA.

[[Back To TMCnet.com's Homepage](#)]

Copyright 2006 Technology Marketing Corporation (TMC) - All rights reserved