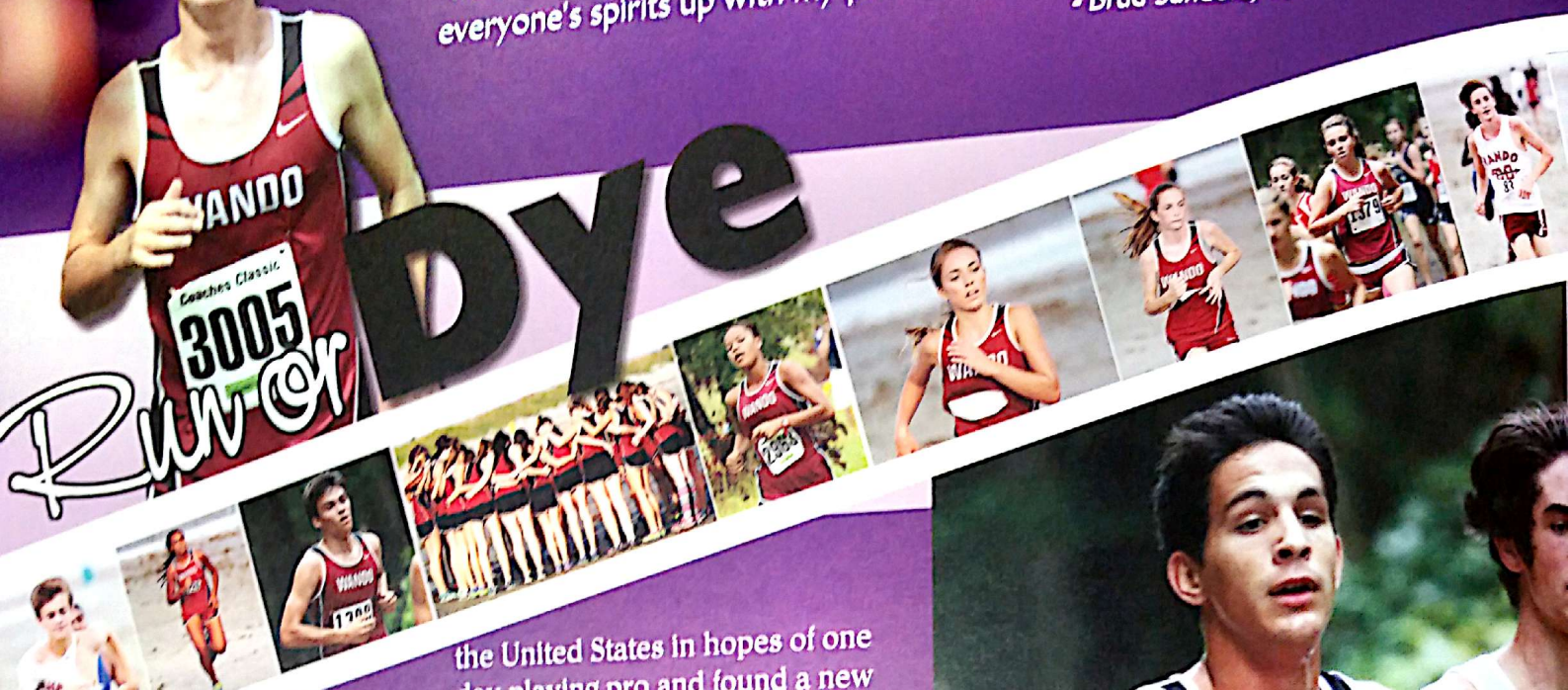


How do you feel you best support your team?
 "I think I'm an emotional booster for my team and bring everyone's spirits up with my personality."
 - Brad Sanders, 10

Ready to Run



A big dream, a huge opportunity, and a monumental move from Paraguay to the Land of Opportunities. **Matias Montiel, 12**, is a cross country star who chose to leave Paraguay to live in the United States and pave a better path for his future.

"I'm one of the four senior captains on the cross country team, so my role is pretty much to lead and get the team in order during practice and such," Montiel said.

It wasn't until recently Montiel discovered a new passion in running.

"I'm a basketball player and once in a while, I'd run just to train for basketball, like conditioning... We [my friend and I] would train for basketball together and run, and you could tell I was a more natural runner, so my friend's dad suggested I should try out for track and cross country," Montiel said.

Montiel originally played basketball, in which he was one of the top players for his age group in Paraguay. He moved to

the United States in hopes of one day playing pro and found a new passion in cross country.

"To play pro basketball was my dream, but now my ultimate goal is to just get a scholarship. Last year, I realized I had a better chance with running," Montiel said.

Montiel lives with his aunt and uncle in Mount Pleasant, but his mother and father still live in Paraguay.

"Sometimes it's really hard to find a time where I'm not busy and they're not busy. Usually we talk Sunday nights. I'm really excited when I get to tell them I got new times; new personal records," Montiel said.

Montiel revels in the life he has in the US.

"Paraguay is a nice country but there's not really many opportunities," Montiel said.

Matias Montiel is living the American dream and doesn't take it granted for a second.

"Many kids that have lived here their whole lives don't realize how blessed they are. Coming from an underdeveloped country, you can understand how blessed you really are," Montiel said.

-Sophie Winnick



photo credit courtesy of just
RUN LIKE THE WIND: (above) **Matias Montiel, 12**, presses on in a race to the finish line. "I feel many of the
 I'm going