CALVIN GAZIANO

When it was suggested by his mother to give up soccer, baseball and basketball as a youth in order to focus on running, Calvin Gaziano did just that. Turns out mom knew what she was talking about. Gaziano quickly blossomed into one of Castro Valley’s best distance runners.

Gaziano, who attended Redwood Christian Elementary and Canyon Middle School before dominating the track and cross country competition at Castro Valley High, credits the East Bay in general, and Castro Valley in particular, for his success.

“The geography of Castro Valley was one of the benefits in our training,” the 1985 graduate recalled. “You have a lot of hills, a lot of trails. We did a lot of training in the hills.”

Gaziano made a career out of running out front in cross country, starting with a victory as a freshman in the Artichoke Invitational, one of the top local invitationals.

Gaziano was the Northern California prep cross country champion as a junior, earning the No. 1 ranking in California after beating a guy who a couple of weeks later went on to capture the national championship. He then repeated his NorCal title as a senior.

He had similar success in track, but through different means. The races were usually shorter -- half-mile, mile and two-mile -- so he hung back in the pack and used his speed for late bursts. His prep track highlights included finishing second in the State Meet two-mile and being crowned national indoor champion at 3,000 meters.

Gaziano began his college career at Texas A&M, where he set a school record at 1,500 meters. He transferred to Cal where he outran Oregon’s legion of All-Americans in a 5,000-meter race. But it was at Berkeley that he injured his knee while venturing into martial arts.

“I ran the next season, but to be honest, I never made it back,” he said. “I lost a few seconds, and at that level, losing a few seconds is devastating.”

Now 52, Gaziano is a sergeant with the Fremont Police Department and a leading authority on crime-scene blood splatter.