



SPORTS WEEK



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Gambrell's turnaround leads to college scholarship

BY CRAIG T. GREENLEE
FOR THE CHRONICLE

Briyonna Gambrell's decision to try track and field was transformative and life-changing. In the not too distant past, Gambrell was clearly treading down the wrong path at North Forsyth.

Academically, she was below par. The combination of low self-expectations, sour attitude and anger issues led to her getting in trouble with teachers and school administrators on a regular basis.

All of that has changed — dramatically. Gambrell, now a senior, made the proverbial u-turn and the change of direc-

tion has worked out quite nicely. Not only is she considered a role model among her peers, but she'll end her high school career as a championship-caliber athlete in the shot put.

A week ago, she won the Mid-Piedmont 3-A Conference title and a few days earlier, she signed a track scholar-



Gambrell

ship offer from Barton College. Gambrell, a two-time City-County champ, was runner-up in the Class 3-A state indoor championship. She lost by 1 1/2 inches to eventual state champ Katelyn Prakash of Matthews Weddington.

As a fourth-place medal winner at last year's state outdoor meet, Gambrell is viewed as a legitimate contender for regional and state honors this spring.

"Right now, I feel excited, happy and joyful," said

Gambrell, who has a 2.8 grade-point average. "As I continued to do better, more blessings came. So, that helped me to stay on the right track."

Coach Michael Smith invited Gambrell to come out for track during her ninth grade year. At that time, her older brother Brandon (now at Coker College in South Carolina) was a standout hurdler for the Vikings. Smith figured that the sister had some of the same athletic genes as the brother.

"I had to look beyond Briyonna's physical stature," said Smith. "With most peo-

See College on B2



Photo by Craig T. Greenlee

Reynolds senior Gabriel Hammonds (second from right) won both hurdles events at the Central Piedmont 4-A Conference track and field championships last week.

Hammonds fully expects to contend in hurdles races

BY CRAIG T. GREENLEE
FOR THE CHRONICLE

Reynolds hurdler Gabriel Hammonds could be a surprise factor in these final weeks of high school track and field. The 6-2, 195-pound senior played outside linebacker on the football team last fall. During the spring, he's shown that he's more than capable of posting top-four finishes in his specialty events at the Midwest 4-A Regional meet on Saturday.

Hammonds has yet to crack the top five in the NCRunners Class 4-A state rankings. Time-wise, he's in that next tier. In recent weeks, though, he has lowered his previous best times in the 110-meter high hurdles and 300-meter hurdles. Entering the regionals, he's seventh in the 300 hurdles (39.86 seconds) rankings and 12th in the highs (14.88).

"Gabe is as focused and as poised as ever," said coach Charlton Rolle. "He shouldn't have any problems making it out of regionals. If he hits his peak, according

to how our practices are set up, he could actually surprise himself and a lot of people at the state championships."

By necessity, Hammonds has had to be a quick-study. With this being only his second year of hurdling, there was so much for him to absorb about the technical aspects of the event. The difference between where he is now in his development compared to a year ago, he explained, is huge.

"Now, I'm a lot more powerful and a lot more experienced than when I first came out," said Hammonds, who won both hurdles races at the Central Piedmont Conference track championships last week. "I'm very proud of where I am right now. But I'm also expecting a lot more of myself before this season comes to an end."

Of the two hurdles events, the 300 gives Hammonds the best shot at earning a medal at the state meet. With the exception of top-ranked Brent Carroll of Charlotte Berry (37.89), six of the state's top seven are separated by only 1.36 seconds.

Although he posted his fastest-ever clocking at the CPC championships, Rolle

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WSSU athletics director to receive service award

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Winston-Salem State University Director of Athletics, Tonia Walker, has been selected to receive the YMCA Black Achievers Distinguished Service Award for her leadership, strong values and service to the Winston-Salem community.

The YMCA Black Achievers Program is a nationwide YMCA movement that strives to prepare teens for college and a profession. The YMCA of Northwest North Carolina Black Achievers Program, which is administered by the Winston Lake Family YMCA, is one of the

See Award on B2



Tonia Walker



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