



Photo by Craig T. Orrenko

Mid-Piedmont 3-A Conference shot put champ Briyonna Gambrell of North Forsyth recently signed with Barton College.

College

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ple her size, you wonder what would they might be able to do in track and field. But when given the chance to show what she could do, she rose to the occasion. Briyonna has become one of the best shot putters in this area, if not the best."

Gambrell readily gives credit to Smith for helping her to realize the extent of her potential. Smith's patience, she explained, was especially helpful.

"I was a problem child and coach took me in and helped me," said Gambrell, who joined the team in her 10th-grade year. "He changed my life. Back then, nobody would have thought that I would sign a scholarship offer for college track. But coach believed in me and that made me believe in myself."

"I got in trouble a lot and I was fighting a lot. Coach sat me down and told me that it was now or never. He made it clear how important it was for me to better my life."

Gambrell has taken quantum leaps in the shot put in spite of not having a throwing events coach to work with. Smith, whose specialty is coaching runners and hurdlers, has forged a partnership of sorts with Gambrell to aid in her development.

"Bri is capable of throwing 40 (feet) or better," said Smith. "But I can only teach her so much. Give her a year in college with a good throwing coach and the right weight training program, and you'll hear more about Bri. She's not burned out, and she's still learning."

Success did not happen right away for Gambrell. There were some frustrating times in her first year on the team. Nevertheless, the newbie shot putter persevered and eventually, better performances came.

"I think I won one time that whole season," she recalled. "But coach kept telling me that things would get better. My throws did get better and in my 11th grade year I went undefeated until regionals. So far, I have yet to lose (this spring). My goal is to win the state championship. This is my last year and my last chance to make it happen"

As an athlete, Gambrell discovered that she could excel in whatever she chose to simply by applying herself

and putting in the necessary work. She learned that the same dedication and passion that helped her do well athletically, works equally as well on the academic side.

"Athletics has a lot to do with the changes in me," she said. "I used to have a bad temper, but now, everything is different. I guess I was in a lot of rage at that time. Now that I'm happy a lot, I have better days and I get along with people that I never thought I would get along with."

"I'm not getting written up any more and my teachers love me. When I started to realize what I was capable of, I just wanted keep working to see where this goes - and it has taken me far."

During her three track seasons at North Forsyth, Gambrell has evolved as a mainstay and team leader. Her presence and personality, Smith explained, has a positive impact on her teammates.

"The other girls know that when Briyonna came out for the team, there weren't many people who thought she had much talent. So they look at how she has progressed, and that gives them a little more confidence about what they're capable of doing."

Races

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isn't convinced that it was the best that Hammonds is capable of. In that race, Hammonds seized the lead from start, but had to hold off a late charge from Parkland's Treguan Barnes to secure the victory.

"Even with him not running the first half of the race as strong as he usually does, he was able to kick it in that last 100 meters and maintain," said Rolle. "And even then, he still dropped a personal best time. So, that's kind of scary to see what he can actually do when he puts the entire race together."



Hammonds

Hammonds arrived at Reynolds two years ago as a junior after his family moved to North Carolina from Daytona Beach, Fla. Back then, he split time between playing football and playing soccer. Hammonds, who has a 3.2 grade-point average, was introduced to the 300 hurdles as a sophomore, but he never competed. When he joined the track team at RJR, Hammonds added the high hurdles to his list of events to compete in.

Even though he was a multi-sport

athlete in high school, Hammonds will stick strictly to track for college. At this point, he's hoping to sign with N.C. State or N.C. A&T. Purdue is also a possibility.

"With the season coming to a close, my main goals are to run 14 (in the high hurdles) and get a college scholarship for track," said Hammonds, who plans to major in physical therapy or kinesiology. "To do that, I have to keep working like I've been doing and stay humble. There are always parts of my race that need fixing. I just want to thank my coaches (Charlton Rolle and Derrick Speas) for pushing me and never giving up on me."

WSSU Rams names L'Tona Lamonte women's basketball coach

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

The Winston-Salem State University Department of Athletics has announced that L'Tona Lamonte has been selected as the 11th head women's basketball coach in school history.

Lamonte spent last season as assistant head coach at North Carolina Central University, after serving as an assistant coach at Belmont University for the previous two seasons.

Lamonte also spent four seasons at North Carolina State University from 2009 to 2013, where she was the director of basketball operations.

Lamonte has spent a total of 14 years in D1 athletics. Before Belmont and NCSU, Lamonte was an assistant coach at Western

Carolina University for five seasons (2004-09) and Georgia Southern University for two years (1999-2001).

While at Belmont, Lamonte was heavily involved with recruiting, scouting, practices, training and community service. Lamonte coached an Ohio Valley Conference preseason player of the year, one all-conference performer, two all-tournament honorees and one OVC All-Newcomer. Belmont won the OVC Eastern Division and played for the OVC championship with Lamonte on the sidelines before earning a bid to the WNIT.

In her time with the NCSU Wolfpack, Lamonte managed the daily operations of the women's basketball office including fundraising, public rela-



Lamonte

tions, community service, marketing, budgeting, travel, compliance and academics. She raised over \$50,000 annually to support the Kay Yow Foundation.

Lamonte experienced great success in her five seasons at Western Carolina. The Catamounts had eight all-conference award winners, 13 all-tournament selections, three all-freshmen performers,

two tournament MVPs, one defensive player of the year and one freshman of the year with Lamonte part of the coaching staff. WCU went on to win three conference championships, made four postseason tournaments and had three 20-plus win seasons including the nation's top turnaround team one year. Lamonte coached six 1,000 point scorers and helped the Catamounts upset No. 21

Louisville during the 2006-07 season. She also coached NCCU assistant Kendra Eaton at WCU.

Lamonte started her coaching career at Carver High School before taking her first collegiate job at Georgia Southern, where she experienced her first 20-plus win season while with the GSU Eagles. Lamonte also coached at the prep level coaching basketball, softball and cross country at Lexington City Schools for three years, including being named coach of the year in 2004.

Academics have always been important to Lamonte as indicated by her resume. Belmont women's basketball ranked 18th nationally with a 3.4 GPA last year; she was on a Wolfpack staff that had four Academic All-

America performers at N.C. State; and three of her Western Carolina squads earned WBCA Academic Top-25 laurels.

Lamonte grew up in Winston-Salem and stayed local as a two-sport student-athlete at Winston-Salem State University. She is in the NCAA softball history book in five different categories and led the nation in stolen bases her junior season with the Rams.

The sports management major graduated cum laude with her bachelor of science degree in 1999. Lamonte obtained a master's degree in kinesiology from Georgia Southern in 2003.

Lamonte is married to Donald Lamonte and is the mother of three girls: Tyler, Kamry and Kadence.

Award

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largest Achievers Programs in the Southeast and one of the premier programs in the nation.

Tonia Walker is in her second year as Director of Athletics at Winston-Salem State University. Walker has been an integral part of the Winston-Salem State University Department of Athletics for more than a decade and has occupied nearly every adminis-

trative position within the department. She was appointed Director of Athletics on May 1, 2014.

Walker is coming off of a banner year for the WSSU Athletics Department that saw the Rams win five CIAA Championships during the 2015-16 year.

The YMCA Black Achievers Gala will be held on Thursday, May 12, at 6:30 p.m. at the Hawthorne Inn and Conference Center. During the gala, high school seniors within the Black Achievers Program are recognized for their scholastic achievement and adult achievers are recognized for excellence on behalf of their corporations and or community sponsors.