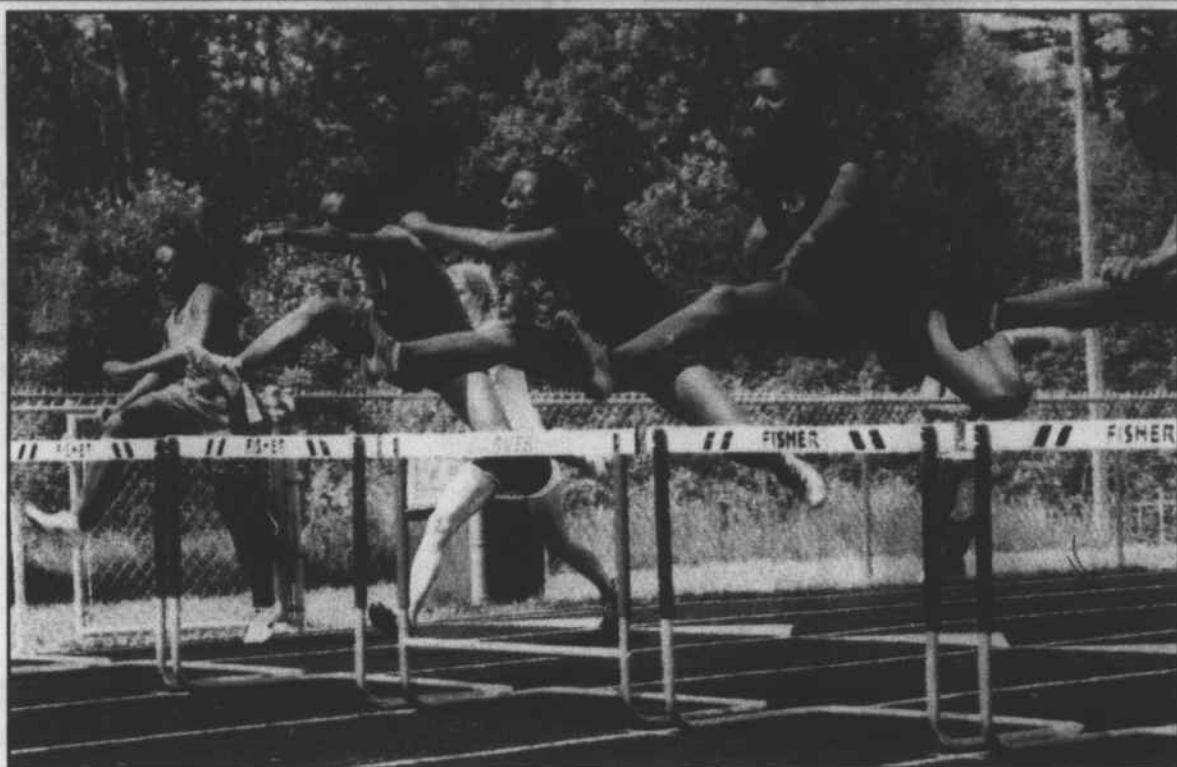


# SPORTS WEEK

MAY 10, 2012



Submitted Photo

Parkland's Ebony Williams (second from right) is a key member of the Mustangs 4x200 and 4x400 relay teams.

## Parkland girls look to take care of business

BY CRAIG T. GREENLEE  
SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Parkland has a girls' track team that's built for the future, but the Mustangs are looking real good in the present. They're young, deep and versatile in the sprints. As this group — comprised mostly of freshmen and sophomores — continues to mature, they're not likely to take a backseat to anyone in the years to come.

The most recent state power rankings compiled by [ncmilesplit.com](http://ncmilesplit.com), provide ample proof that Parkland has already positioned itself as one of North Carolina's upper echelon programs. The Mustangs are slotted third in the Class 4-A team rankings behind powerhouses Raleigh Wakefield and Charlotte West Mecklenburg.

Parkland, however, has some business to tend to. The immediate focus is the 4-A Midwest Regionals on Saturday at Reagen. The top four finishers in each event qualify for the state championships on May 19 in Greensboro.

"Over the next three years, we'll be the team to beat," said Antwan Hughes, Parkland's sprint coach. "It's all a matter of everybody staying focused and staying committed to do the training it takes to be a champion. The reason they're so strong is because they all run cross-country and indoor track as a base to prepare for the outdoor season. Because of that, they're so much farther along (in their development)."

If Ebony Williams finishes among the top four in the 300-meter hurdles at the regionals as expected, she figures to be a strong contender at the state meet. Williams, a freshman, has the fifth-fastest time in 4-A this spring. Top-ranked Mollie Williams of Clayton has run faster (44.06 seconds) than Williams (44.66), but not by much.



Hughes

"For starters, I have to cut down on how much I stutter-step between hurdles," said Williams. "Having confidence is important. I just have to remind myself to rely on my training, which I know will help me to perform my best on the big day."

The Mustangs have excelled in the sprint relays all year. Barring any unforeseen mishaps, such as injuries, botched hand-offs, or being disqualified, Parkland should advance to the state championships and have an impact. Hughes envisions a top-three finish in the 4x100, 4x200 and 4x400.

Wakefield and West Mecklenburg are considered the heavyweight contenders in the 4x100. But for the five other teams who are separated by just .54 seconds, it's going to be wide open. Parkland, ranked fourth in the 4x100, is in that mix. The foursome of Myshale Spignor, Ila Mumford, Katlin Sherman and Miaysa Bryant will keep the Mustangs in the hunt.

In the 4x200, Wakefield is dominant with the nation's fastest clocking of 1:35.98. Parkland won't be blown away. Sherman, Spignor, Bryant and Williams are convinced they can give any team they face a run for the money.

Case in point: Parkland and West Mecklenburg staged a showdown at the Villains Relays hosted by Bishop McGuinness a little over a month ago. The Mustangs won the 4x200 when West Meck had baton exchange issues. In the latest 4x200 rankings, Parkland holds down the No. 2 spot (1:40.33) and West Meck is third (1:41.25).

At this year's state indoor championships, Wakefield easily won the 4x400 over runner-up Parkland. The Mustangs (No. 5 in the state outdoor rankings) could make a push for a top-three finish if Erin Morrison can return to form. Morrison was sidelined for a month because of a sprained meniscus in her left knee. She rejoined the team in mid-April.

Craig T. Greenlee is the author of "November Ever After." For details, visit <http://NovemberEverAfter.com>.

## MLB legend to take part in Dash events

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

The Winston-Salem Dash will hold a public "FanFest on Fourth" and a number of other public activities to celebrate its hosting of the California League - Carolina League All-Star Game on June 19 at BB&T Ballpark.

A highlight of the All-Star Game festivities will be the All-Star Luncheon at noon on June 19, when the Dash will welcome baseball legend Johnny Bench, a Cincinnati Reds Hall of Famer and Carolina League alumnus, to Winston-Salem.

All-Star Game players and guests will arrive in Winston-Salem on Sunday, June 17 and kick-off their schedule at noon on Monday, June 18 with a tour of Winston-Salem that will include visits with children and autograph sessions at Brenner Children's Hospital, Ronald McDonald House and the Centers for Exceptional Children.



Johnny Bench

Later in the day on June 18, the Dash and the Downtown Winston-Salem Partnership will host the FanFest on Fourth from 5 to 8 p.m. on Fourth Street, which will be closed to traffic, in front of Foothills Brewing. Entrance to the All-Star Game FanFest is free to the public and will include interaction with players, autograph sessions, inflatable fun, the Dash Pack and food vendors. The Dickens will perform.

The June 19 luncheon will also include Pat O'Conner, president of Minor League Baseball, who will speak prior to a conversation with Bench moderated by Ben Sutton, president of IMG College. Tickets to the All-Star Lunch at the Embassy Suites Grand Pavilion will be available through the Winston-Salem Dash ticket office beginning in mid-May.

The All-Star Game begins at 7:15 p.m. at BB&T Ballpark and will feature pre-game introductions, a flyover, opening day-like national anthem and post-game fireworks. The day concludes with an after-game party at Ziggy's beginning at 9 p.m.

To purchase tickets and for more information, call 336-714-2287 or visit [www.wsdash.com](http://www.wsdash.com).



Tarrell Robinson on the sidelines.

A&T Photo

## Robinson to succeed Cage-Bibbs

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

North Carolina A&T has a new head women's basketball coach. Last week, Director of Athletics Earl Hilton announced Tarrell Robinson will head the program.

Robinson replaces legendary coach Patricia Cage-Bibbs, who resigned last month to take the head women's basketball coaching position at her alma mater, Grambling State University.

Robinson, 34, served as an assistant coach to Bibbs for four seasons. Prior to the 2008-09 season, he was promoted to associate head coach. The four-year working relationship resulted in the program's most prosperous era in terms of championships and player accolades.

After a 9-19 season in 2005-06, Robinson made his mark at A&T through rigorous recruiting. He assisted Cage-Bibbs in landing Fayetteville, N.C., native Ta'Wuana Cook. Cook went on to be the program's first MEAC Rookie of the Year, its second all-time leading scorer and its all-time leader in assists. He was also instrumental in signing two-time MEAC all-tournament performer Lamona Smalley and

2009 MEAC Player of the Year Brittanie Taylor-James. When Jaleesa Sams, who was ranked as high as No. 31 nationally by Scouts.com, signed to play at A&T in 2007, the women's basketball team had its most highly-touted recruit in history.

The recruiting efforts helped the Aggies compile a 51-15 record, two MEAC

regular-season championships and a MEAC tournament championship from 2007-09. Three current players — guard Amber Calvin, forward JaQuayla Berry and center Nikia Gorham — were also a part of Robinson's recruiting efforts. Cook, Sams, Taylor-James and Berry are all 1,000-point career scorers and all-conference performers.

"I am humbled and honored to be named the new head women's basketball coach at North Carolina A&T State University," said Robinson, who is a 2001 graduate of the school. "Excellence is what we will strive for every day in the classroom as well as on the basketball court. I am excited to be back in the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference, one of the most competitive leagues and fun atmospheres in the country."



Cage-Bibbs

## 49ers jump to Conference USA

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

UNC Charlotte Chancellor Philip L. Dubois has announced that the university has accepted an invitation to join Conference USA in all sports beginning in the 2013-14 academic year.

"The invitation to join Conference USA is momentous in what it can do for our university," Dubois said. "We have yet to take a snap on McColl-Richardson field, yet to play our first game, yet to have even our first practice — but because of who we are, because of what we've done, and because of the great community we live in — we have the unique opportunity to become one of the first programs in history to go from no football to FBS (Football Bowl Subdivision) football in the minimum time allowed by NCAA regulations."

Conference USA is an FBS Conference that will provide a home for all 17 of the 49ers sports, including football. The 49ers football team will enjoy its inaugural season in 2013 as an independent FCS (Football Championship Subdivision)

program and will compete in its first FBS season in Conference USA in 2015. Charlotte will be bowl eligible for football in the 2016 season. Each of the 49ers' other 16 sports will begin play in Conference USA in 2013-14.

Conference USA, which is adding four other schools, will have a 13-team membership that includes Charlotte, East Carolina, Florida International, Louisiana Tech, Marshall, North Texas, Rice, Southern Mississippi, Tulane, Tulsa, UAB, UTEP and University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA).

Charlotte was a member of Conference USA from 1995-96 to 2004-05. The 49ers joined the Atlantic 10 Conference in 2005-06 and will remain in that league through the 2012-13 season.

This is the school's fifth membership in a Division I Conference. Charlotte was also a member of the Sun Belt Conference (1976-77 to 1990-91), the Metro Conference (1991-92 to 1994-95), Conference USA (1995-96 to 2004-05) and the Atlantic 10 conference (2005-06 to present).



## Carolina Tide breeze through Classic

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

The Carolina Tide AAU 10u Team won the Hot Shot Classic on April 28 at Reidsville High School in Reidsville. The Tide rolled through pool play with a 2-0 record. The team kept up the good court work when bracket play began.

Scorching the nets with hot-shooting, the Tide had several players contribute to its 54-19 victory over Team Phoenix in the Championship Game. Jalen Ferguson had 15 points, followed by Cody Fuller (10 points), Davis Blackwell (six points), Levar Strange (six points), Gmone Wilson (five points), Camian Shell (five points), Jadin Cotton (five points), T.J. Geer (two points) and Asaiah Leggett, who had four assists.

The Tide are preparing for next month's prestigious Maryland Invitational, which will include several top teams from across the country. The Tide will also play in the Nationals in Cincinnati, Ohio in July. The team is coached by Bennie Oates.



Front row, from left: Gmone Wilson, Asaiah Leggett, Camian Shell, Cody Fuller, and T.J. Geer, (second row) Jadin Cotton, Head Coach Bennie Oates, Davis Blackwell, Jalen Ferguson and Levar Strange.

