



Photos by Craig T. Greenlee

In spite of being slowed by an ankle injury, Ila Mumford of Parkland finished fourth in the long jump and fifth in the triple jump.

Parkland

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ly matched," said Sherman, who also placed third in the 55-meter dash. "On any given day, it could be me who wins, or it could be her."

The 4x200 relay belonged to the Mustangs from the very start. Miaysha Bryant, Sherman and Shanone Cannon gave Williams a comfortable cushion and she sealed the victory with a strong anchor leg to set another state record (1:39.92). Cary was a distant second at 1:42.07.

Parkland put the finishing touches on its state championship with a pulsating victory in the 4x400 relay (McKinley McNeill, Sherman, Kimani Davis and Williams). Sherman lost the lead on the second leg and was in fourth place with 160 meters to go.

Coming out of the final turn, she brought the crowd to its feet with a blistering kick to put the Mustangs back in front. In the process, Sherman ran past Layla White of Cary, the three-time state indoor champ at 500 meters and

last year's state outdoor champ at 400 meters.

Cary regained the lead on the third leg. By the time Williams took the baton as anchor, she was 30 meters behind. Gradually, Williams began to gain ground, then she opened full throttle over the final 90 meters to run past Cary's Lakeshia Warner. The dramatic come-from-behind victory produced a third state record (3:55.16) for Parkland. Runner-up Cary finished seven meters off the pace at 3:55.76.

"I went out on that first lap a lot faster than I anticipated and my legs started to tie up," Sherman explained. "Then I got caught by three teams. That's when I made up in my mind that I wasn't going to go out like that. This is my senior year and my last state indoor championship, so I just left everything I had on the track."

Given the lead that Cary had on the final leg, Williams figured that at best, the Mustangs only realistic hope was to concentrate on finishing second. But as the race continued, Williams sensed that

there might be a remote chance to pull off a startling comeback.

"At first, I didn't think it was possible to catch the first-place runner," said Williams. "But as I started to get closer and closer, the crowd got louder and louder. I came around that last curve and decided to just go for it and things worked out in our favor."

One of the most hotly-contested races of the state meet involved McNeill of Parkland and White of Cary in the 500-meter dash. McNeill surged ahead to take the lead with 190 meters to go and pushed White hard all the way to the finish line.

With 20 meters to the finish, McNeill tied up badly and couldn't maintain her running form. White won by a stride in 1:14.10 and McNeill was second at 1:14.92. White collapsed from exhaustion

after crossing the finish line.

Winning the team title serves as strong evidence of the

Mustangs depth. Entering the state championships, sprinter Erin Morrison (500, 4x200 relay, 4x400 relay) was unavailable because of an Achilles injury.

Jumps specialist Ila Mumford returned to action, but was still slowed by an ankle injury.

Even so, Mumford contributed to Parkland's cause by finishing fourth in the long jump and fifth in the triple jump.

Nateja Hale and Jahnae Bowman exceeded expectations. Hale

was second in the triple jump (37-feet, 6 1/2 inches) and fourth in the 55 hurdles (8.35 seconds).

Bowman placed sixth in the long jump (17-feet, 3 inches) and seventh in the 55 dash (7.24 seconds).

"With Erin being out and Ila not being 100 percent healthy, Nateja and Jahnae really stepped up big for us," said Hughes. "They finished higher than where they were seeded in both of their events."



Hughes



Photo by Livingstone College Athletics

Cierra York has played at an all-star level during her time at Livingstone.

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Winning next week's CIAA Tournament, she explained, is not a case of wishful thinking.

"Getting adjusted to the bad news is hard," said York, an All-CIAA pick last season and All-Rookie in 2012. "Our record has changed, but there's still some season left and the (CIAA) tournament. We know how to win and we know what winning feels like. It all comes down to us playing good basketball and allowing our performance to speak for itself. Our goals to win the CIAA and go to the NCAA Tournament haven't changed. But regardless of what goes on, we're a family, and we'll stick together."

York, who played at Winston-Salem Prep, has performed at an all-star level during her college career with the Lady Blue Bears. Through 23 games, the 5-foot-8 senior guard averaged 12.7 points, 5.7 rebounds, 2.4 assists and 1.7 steals per game.

Earlier in her career, York posted better numbers. But now that Livingstone has more scoring on the roster, there's no need for York to go solo as often as she did in past seasons. Aside from York, the Lady Blue Bears have ample firepower with newcomers Amber Curtis (12.3 points) and Precious Roberts (11.9 points).

"At first, it was difficult to adjust," York confessed. "I've always been the one who was expected to take over offensively. But I've learned to share the basketball. Now, I get very excited when my teammates go off (scoring). The defense has to focus on stopping them, which creates more openings for everyone else and that makes the game easier. I'm thrilled to finally have a team that I fit in well with."

First-year coach Anita Howard has a deep appreciation of York's value as a key ingredient and steady influence on and off the court. Howard refers to York as the respected veteran voice who's been the go-to player on a struggling program for most of her college career.

"Cierra is the epitome of what we try to instill in our newcomers," said Howard. "She's the old soul who keeps everybody grounded and humbled. Anytime she's on the floor - whether it's in practice or in a game - she plays hard and she plays with a lot of pride."

Howard's coming to Livingstone represents a re-connect of sorts for the coach and York. Having conducted a summer workout with York while she was in high school, Howard was impressed with her outside shooting. As an assistant at Shaw, she attempted to sign the former

Phoenix playmaker. But York opted to join the Lady Blue Bears instead.

When York learned last spring that Howard would be the new Livingstone coach, she was ecstatic. "Knowing Coach Howard's background, I knew that she'd come in and make things happen," said York, a biology major who has a 3.1 grade-point average.

"There was never a doubt in my mind that things would begin to change for the better in her very first year."

Not long after her arrival on campus, Howard wasted no time outlining her expectations. The new coach wanted York to further fine-tune her game, which in turn, would help accelerate

Livingstone's turnaround. For that to happen, York and everybody else would have to fully embrace the concept of doing more in every facet of the sport.

"Cierra needed to speed up the release on her jump shot," said Howard. "Once opponents found out how good a shooter she is, defenders started closing out on her very quickly. As a result, she ended up taking fewer shots."

Developing a quicker release, though, was just one of the items she needed to work on.

As a guard, she has the size to grab more rebounds and she's doing a good job with that."

Howard understands how hungry York is to win a conference championship.

York is keenly aware her new coach's handiwork at Salem College. Under Howard's watch, the Spirits went from being worst to first in two program-changing seasons.

So, the two made a pact. Howard promised York that she would bring in the needed pieces to help Livingstone become a legitimate

CIAA title contender. In response, York promised Howard that she would help deliver a conference tournament championship, which would be the first for the Livingstone women since 2000.



Above, Tyrek McNeil dribbles past a Reagan defender.

At left, Mount Tabor JV coach Willie Harrison talks to his team during a time-out.

Photos by Craig T. Greenlee



Mount Tabor

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did what they were asked to do," said Coach Jeff Noe of Reagan. "Not being able to rebound the ball really hurt us. I won't say that our lack of size was the reason we lost. We just weren't prepared to handle Mount Tabor's size, and that's on me. That's my fault."

Bond Craver gave Mount Tabor a big lift, scoring 16 of his team-high 23 points in the first half. Wilkins (16 points) and T.J.

Stevens (15 points) turned in strong offensive performances in the second half.

Mount Tabor delivered the knock-out blow midway through the fourth quarter. Reagan had sliced the Spartans lead to 59-54. It appeared that the Raiders would pull closer when Malik Miles darted to the basket on a drive.

But before Miles to get to the rim, he was stripped of the ball and Wilkins headed down-court in the opposite direction on the break. He finished with a

finger-roll lay-up to push the lead back to 7 points (61-54). After that sequence, the Spartans pulled away to win comfortably by double digits.

Maverick LaRue provided much of the offensive spark for Reagan with a game-high 24 points. Miles added 13 points, Reynolds Craver followed with 11 and Trey McDaniel scored 10 points.

The Spartans managed to remain No. 1 in the CPC despite losing two starters. Point guard Jake Rutter and power forward Karron

Jeter were recently moved up to the varsity. Rutter was the Spartans best shooter and Jeter served as a formidable factor in the lanes at both ends of the floor.

"We don't have to depend on one or two players all the time," said Harrison. "Bond Craver came ready to play against Reagan. In every game we've played this season, it's been a different person who has gotten the job done. Our guys stepped up at the right time. That's the name of the game."