

# SPORTS WEEK

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## WSSU sprinter and coach earn CIAA Honors

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

The Winston-Salem State Lady Rams track & field team earned a pair of weekly honors from the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA), Wednesday, April 1. Senior sprinter, Nya Michaux, was named the CIAA Track Athlete of the Week while head coach Inez Turner was named the CIAA Women's Track & Field Coach of the Week.



Michaux

Michaux took home the honor after a great performance at the Winthrop Adidas Invitational. She placed second in the women's 100m dash with an 11.79, an NCAA Division II provisional qualifying time. She qualified

for the event finals after winning the preliminaries with a 12.05. She was also second in the women's 200m dash with a 24.95.

Turner took home the honor after leading a great overall effort by the Lady Rams. Under her guidance, the team dominated the sprint events with two of the top three finishers in the women's 100m dash and the 200m dash. Under her guidance, freshman Domtilla Kiplaget also placed third in the women's 5,000m run and fifth in the women's 1,500m run.



Turner

The Lady Rams won't have long to wait for their action when they head to nearby High Point to take part in the Vertklasse Meeting. For more information on Lady Rams track & field, contact the WSSU Office of Athletic Media Relations at 336-750-2143 or log on to www.WSSURams.com.

## Lady Rams' Coach Hilliard-Gray: 'Record doesn't reflect talent level'

BY CRAIG T. GREENLEE FOR THE CHRONICLE



WSSU's Chyna Riley has emerged as a valued contributor in her sophomore season.

This softball season has been a struggle for Winston-Salem State. With less than a month remaining before the CIAA championships, the Lady Rams were 10-17 overall.

That's a different scenario from recent history. WSSU has won three of the last four conference crowns and advanced to the NCAA Division II Atlantic Regional Tournament each time.

A look at the roster provides some insight about the team's sporadic play. Roughly 70 percent of the roster is comprised of freshmen and sophomores. As for upperclassmen, the numbers are sparse (three seniors and one junior).

"We've had our ups and downs this season," said veteran WSSU coach LaTaya Hilliard-Gray. "Our won-loss record doesn't reflect our talent level. This group is still going through a growing process and learning how to come together as a team."

"Even though we've struggled, I'm very satisfied that our players continue to remain totally committed to the program. The vision is for us to grow stronger as the season progresses. Coming down the stretch, we'll have plenty of opportunities to see how much we can grow."

In a double-header loss to Anderson University (SC) on April 4, the Lady Rams were never able to get fully in sync against the Trojans, ranked No. 21 in the national polls. The first game ended in a 10-6 defeat. WSSU cranked out 11 hits, but left eight runners stranded on base. In an 8-2 setback in the second game, the Lady Rams had nine hits, but the three errors they committed contributed to their downfall.

The season didn't get off to the best of starts. The Lady Rams lost their first seven games and it's only been twice this season that they've won back-to-back games. Establishing continuity hasn't been easy either. During the early part of the season, inclement weather resulted in 13 games being postponed or

See Lady Rams on B2

## Tajanel McNeill: WSSU Track All-American

BY CRAIG T. GREENLEE FOR THE CHRONICLE

When Tajanel McNeill arrived at Winston-Salem State four years ago, she was unknown, unheralded and had no grand expectations for her future as a college athlete. Those circumstances never caused McNeill to waver in her desire to make the most of an opportunity to earn a roster spot on the women's track and field team.

Since her freshman year, McNeill has matured and blossomed as an all-purpose athlete. Aside from competing in all three of the horizontal jumping events (long jump, high jump, triple jump), she expanded her horizons to include the 100-meter hurdles, javelin throw and 4x100 relay.

Over the past three years, McNeill, a senior from Newark, N.J., has owned the field events in the CIAA. During that span, she's the six-time Field Events MVP of the conference track and field championships (indoor and outdoor). At the national level, she ranks among the elites. McNeill is a three-time All-America, twice in the triple jump and once as a member of the Lady Rams 4x100 relay.

"Tajanel has become the athlete she is today because of her

discipline," said Coach Inez Turner of Winston-Salem State. "She made the choice to be the best that she can be. Not only does she do the necessary extra work, but she has the mindset that you need to compete and succeed at a high level."

By the time her college career comes to a close, McNeill, an Exercise Physiology major, could end up being the most decorated women's track athlete at Winston-Salem State. For now, though, she'll concentrate on winning national titles in the triple jump and 4x100 relay at the NCAA outdoor championships in May. McNeill recently took time out of her schedule to discuss her college career with Sports Week.

SW: You weren't heavily recruited coming out of high school, so you came to track try-outs as a walk-on and your career has turned out extremely well. Summarize your time at WSSU.

McNeill: My time as a walk-on was definitely motivating. It helped to mold me into the athlete I am today. When I first came out, I didn't know my place on

See McNeill on B2

## Wake's Caldwell sets sights on setting school record

BY CRAIG T. GREENLEE FOR THE CHRONICLE

Nyki Caldwell's pursuit of clearing 6-feet in the high jump is anything but a pipe dream. At this juncture, she's only 1½ inches shy of soaring to heights which have never been achieved in women's track and field at Wake Forest University.

Caldwell, a senior who majors in Health and Exercise Science, closed out the winter season in grand fashion. She jumped 5-feet-10 inches to win her specialty at the Atlantic Coast Conference Indoor Track and Field Championships in February. As a sophomore two years ago, she was the ACC indoor runner-up.

With that first-place finish, Caldwell became the first Wake Forest woman to win a gold medal in a field event at the conference indoor championships. While the title-clinching jump wasn't her best ever (PR is 5-feet-10½ inches), it brought Caldwell so much joy and satisfaction to make All-Conference as an ACC champion.

"I was very pleased with the outcome," Caldwell said. "Things turned out the way I hoped they would. It would've been nice to PR. But this was the ACC meet, so what counts more than anything else is that you win."

Caldwell makes it clear that her ultimate goal is to set a new Wake Forest standard at 6-feet by the time her college track career ends later this spring. The current school record of 5-feet-11 3/4 inches



Nyki Caldwell of Wake Forest is the ACC indoor champion in the high jump.

was set by Trina Bindell in 1996.

"Achieving 6-feet would secure my place in the record books," said Caldwell, a four-time All-State high jumper in high school (Dexter, Mich.). "I'll focus a lot on my steps and technique. I'm looking to win at the ACC outdoor meet and qualify for the NCAA Regionals."

In the high jump, mastering technique is essential. It's an event which demands precision, speed and strength, much like the athletes who run hurdles.

Jumpers typically take a pre-determined number of strides that will put them at the right take-off

See Caldwell on B2



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