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In the dead of the 2007 summer, a 9-year-old boy received the baton for his leg of the boys 4x400m and hawked down six runners in front of him in just over one minute. He collapsed in the Las Vegas sun and vomited from the heat and exhaustion after the race, but it didn't matter, Kameron Jones knew he was meant to run track.

After that, the San Diego native never questioned his talent. In high school at The Bishop's School, Jones continued to find success in the 400m dash. He was a five-time Coastal League Champion in the event and he knew he was good enough to compete at the collegiate level.

"I was looking for schools and sending emails out and I was getting nothing back," the senior sprinter said. "I was looking at the rosters and I knew I wouldn't be the slowest on their team but nothing was working for me."

Despite his mundane recruiting process, Jones knew he had what it took to go to a Power Five school. He just needed one coach to give him a chance.

Fate stepped in when one of his classmates at The Bishops School, the nephew of head coach Andrew Valmon, connected the two. The times Jones had posted spoke for themselves. He had potential and Valmon, who did not respond to a request for comment, needed bodies.

"I wasn't on any kind of scholarship freshman year," he said.

Jones was at the very bottom of the totem pole. He was a walk on for the partially funded men's track and field team, who finished dead last at the outdoor Big Ten Championships for the last three seasons in a row.

In 2012, the University of Maryland cut men's cross country and indoor track and field due to funding difficulties. When Jones was entering his freshman year in 2016, the existing men's program was trying to shake the effects of the discontinuation, which had robbed it of nearly all of its seniors. Jones would be a part of the re-building and re-branding effort.

As a freshman, Jones earned a spot on the men's 4x400m relay squad, which placed in the top eight at the Big Ten Championships with a time of 3:12.06.

"I wanted [the coaches] to have confidence in me," Jones said. "I wanted them to know they could throw me in [any event] and I could do well. I had to prove to myself."

During his freshman campaign, Jones proved to be the guinea pig he aspired to be, competing in events he never had before like the 400m hurdles and the 800m at several meets.

"He can put up a fight for every event he competes in," said Jones' teammate, Brady Snelson. "He goes all out for every race he is in even if it's the 800m."

Jones' versatility has been a key factor in his success. During the 2018 indoor season, Jones combined his 400m speed with his mid-distance stamina in his first ever 600m dash. Out of a 24-person field, Jones took gold, posting a time of 1:16.76.

"I think things started coming together for me during my sophomore year," said Jones. "Freshman year I was adapting but my times started to look how I wanted them to after that first year."

Jones' success did begin to skyrocket after a mediocre freshman year. He began breaking school records that had stood for decades and shattering his personal best marks. In February 2019, Jones shipped up to New York, to compete at the USA Indoor Track and Field Championships in the 600m, an event that he has only run four times prior according to TFRS.

"Superficially, competing at USA's was the most important thing I have done for the program," he said. "It was a really big thing for me not only because it proved that I could compete against the pros, but because it is a positive representation of the progress the men's side has made."

Jones' role on and off the track has become increasingly more demanding as time has passed. He is the president of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee and was named one of three student athletes to receive the prestigious Samuel J. LeFrak scholarship.

"I came [to Maryland] to get an education," he said. "I want to leave here knowing I was as involved as I could possibly be because this is why I'm here."

While it may seem like Jones came to Maryland and immediately assumed a leadership position, he has evolved into this role as his experiences have widened.

"He hasn't always been the leader he is now," Snelson said, who is also a senior, "The way the program is set up, it doesn't require underclassman to be leaders"

According to Jones, when he was an underclassman he saw his older teammates not taking their roles seriously.

"Good programs don't do the things we were doing my freshman and sophomore years," Jones said, referring to the social weekend habits that he says were prevalent at the time. "I want people to take us seriously because we are serious about what we are doing."

Now, as he gears up for the upcoming indoor and outdoor seasons, Jones also has set his sights on the Olympic Trials. With a personal best time of 46.17, Jones will have to slash his time by almost a full second to hit the qualifying standard.

“My main focus, of course, is my collegiate season and making it to NCAA's,” said Jones. While he has not yet qualified for an NCAA championship meet yet, he remains hopeful in what he can do.

“I know what I am capable of and hitting the [Olympic trials] standard is definitely possible,” he said. “I’m just having fun with it.”