

Pacific Association Youth Profile

Julian Purvis

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Track didn't always come as a natural activity for 16-year-old Julian Purvis.

"At first, I didn't like track," she said. "As the years came along, track became more fun and that's when I took it more seriously."

Purvis took her first try at track as an eight-year old when her younger sister, Ashton, was getting into the sport. Training under coach Will Pittman with the 3M Track Club in Oakland, Purvis competed in the shot put, becoming one of the best shot putters in the country for her age.

Then, as a nine-year old, she finally found her true calling in the sport: hurdling. The senior-to-be at Oakland's St. Elizabeth High School is now one of the top prep hurdlers in the nation, setting the national sophomore class record for the 100 meter hurdles (13.60 seconds) and reaching the all time Number 3 high school mark for the state of California (13.32).

And, Purvis isn't done. Traveling with her sister Ashton—who will be competing in the 100 and 200 meters—Julian will represent the United States at the International Association of Athletics Federation's (IAAF) World Youth Championships in Ostrava, Czech Republic (July 11-July 15).

Purvis will compete in the 100 meter hurdles, and sees the opportunity as both a great honor and a challenge.

"I'm very nervous, but I'm looking forward to the competition and I'm ready to do well," she said.

The hurdler has come a long way to get where she is today.

"I'm proud of myself because when I first started doing hurdles and running and everything I was really iffy about running in general," Purvis said.

Under the training of coach Curtis Taylor, however, she developed her skills and technique, and used them to become the fine athlete that she is today. Taylor coaches for the East Oakland Youth Development Center, the PA/USATF club with which Purvis is currently affiliated..

"When I was ten or eleven I got hamstring problems," she said. "Curtis Taylor has cleaned me up a lot. He made me feel like a new hurdler. That's when I became a world-class hurdler."

Purvis continued to underscore the importance that Taylor has had on her hurdling.

"I have one of the best hurdle coaches, all the way around," she said. "I know my sport down pat. If you know your sport down pat you can critique your race and know what you messed up on, and you can always do better."

"If you don't know your sport and what you're doing then you're going to be iffy about your race."

Coach Taylor has worked with both Julian and her sister, and delights in the strides that the two have taken so far in their young track careers.

"They are able to live up to what's expected of them," Taylor said. "It's been fun, but it's just starting. "It's going to be interesting to see what they do in the following years. They're good kids."

Taylor also commented about what he thinks are Purvis' chances at the upcoming IAAF World Youth Championships.

"I think she has a good chance of getting a gold medal," he said. "She definitely has a good chance of medaling."

Purvis also feels good about her chances, although she is taking everything in stride.

"I take it step by step because anything can happen," she said.

With her senior year of high school approaching, Purvis has done a lot of thinking about where she will go to college. She has received letters from all around the country, garnering attention from schools such as UCLA, the University of South Carolina, the University of Michigan, and the University of Oregon.

Although she is not sure about where she wants to attend yet, Purvis has definite intentions to hurdle in college and, possibly, after that.

"My future is going to college and doing well there; after that we'll see how far I'll go," she explained. "If it takes me to the professional level then I wouldn't mind doing that. I want to see how far track goes because I've been doing it so long."

In her life off of the track, Julian Purvis is outgoing, although a bit more quiet and reserved than her younger sister Ashton.

"Our personalities make us two different people," Julian said. "Ashton is happy-go-lucky. If I know you, I'm energetic when I speak to you. If I don't, I'm more reserved."

Purvis also commented on the unique dynamic of having another top track athlete in the family.

"She's way more competitive than I am," Purvis said about Ashton. "Tremendously [more]. I'm learning that [competitiveness] is what I need to work on."

The IAAF World Youth Championships should help in the development of Purvis' competitive instincts. It will also be a great chance for her to showcase her abilities while sizing herself up against some of the best youth athletes in the world. Some of the past winners of the IAAF Youth Worlds, such as Allyson Felix, have gone on to achieve great success. Felix is the 2004 Olympic 200 meter silver medalist and World Junior record holder;

But at this point, Purvis is simply happy with where she has come in the sport.

"Being one of the best in the world and one of the top hurdlers actually makes me feel good," Julian Purvis said. "I didn't think I could be this great in track."