

Pacific Association Youth Profile
Ashton Purvis

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Ashton Purvis might be only 15 years old, but she's already got a lot to her name.

The sophomore-to-be at Oakland's St. Elizabeth High School set three national high school class records in her freshman year:

In her first year competing at the high school level, Purvis broke the freshman indoor national record in the 60 meters with a time of 7.49 seconds. She also set a world outdoor best for 14-year olds in the 100 meters with a time of 11.40. Purvis added yet another notch to her belt by establishing a new freshman national indoor record in the 200 meters with a mark of 23.55.

And, in just a few weeks, the young Purvis will compete thousands of miles across the world at the International Association of Athletics Federation's (IAAF) World Youth Championships in Ostrava, Czech Republic (July 11-July 15).

The IAAF World Youth Championships attract some of the top youth athletes from around the world. Considering Purvis' record-setting year as a freshman, her selection was only natural. She will compete in her trademark events, the 100 meters and 200 meters.

Purvis has been running for ten years and has traveled across America to compete, but this is the first time that her track career has taken her to a competition outside of the country. She is honored to have the chance to represent the United States at the IAAF World Youth Championships.

"This is the biggest thing [I've ever done]," she said. "I'm really nervous about going to run outside of my country to an unfamiliar place. Everybody else is too, so I can't let that be an excuse. This is my first time running for the USA team and it's exciting."

It would be easy for all of this success and honor to get to the head of your average teenager. But Purvis tries to take everything in stride.

“It feels so amazing,” she said of the records she’s broken. “I can’t exactly pinpoint it but it’s exciting. I’m learning how to get used to [breaking] all these records. It’s not easy, though. You don’t want to get too full of yourself.”

A notable influence in Purvis’ young athletic career has been her older sister, Julian, who will be a senior at St. Elizabeth this coming fall. Julian is also competing at the IAAF World Youth Championships, representing the USA as a hurdler in the 100 and 200 meters.

Ashton commented on the influence her sister has had on her.

“It’s exciting,” she said. “I always step my game up. I have to show the same enthusiasm as Julian.

“We push each other. We argue with each other. Everything is competitive between us, even though we do different events.”

The sisters have both excelled at Oakland’s St. Elizabeth, establishing a dynasty of sorts.

“They were putting me on a high pedestal because I had to be just as great as her,” Purvis said about the initial comparisons to her sister, Julian. “It was scary.”

Yet, the younger Purvis has answered all of the calls, utilizing her sister’s success as a springboard rather than a detriment.

For the last few years, Purvis has honed her skills under the tutelage and training of coach Curtis Taylor and the East Oakland Youth Development Center. She was not completely healthy when she first came to Taylor and needed to work on her form. Taylor has been developing Purvis for over three years now, and the results show.

Purvis praised the work of her coach.

“I’ve improved in running, my form and how I approach track,” she said. “I’m a student of my sport. Curtis has prepared me for anything.”

Taylor has coached both Ashton and Julian, and he is proud about how far they have come.

“It’s been a fun ride,” Taylor said. “We have had a lot of other good kids who have come before them. It’s good that they’ve been able to follow in their footsteps.”

Although Purvis will be younger than much of the competition, she stands a very good chance of medaling at the upcoming IAAF meet.

“I think that if she can hold herself together through the rounds and the travel, and being away from home, she’ll do quite well,” Taylor said.

Despite all that she has already accomplished, and the rest that is to come, Ashton Purvis is still your normal teenager. Born in Berkeley, Calif., Ashton spends most of her free time watching television and going out to the movies. With her sophomore of high school approaching, Purvis is simply focusing on her skills right now, not worrying about a future destination for college.

“I’m not really sure, but I know I might run in college,” she said. “I just want to improve everything that I can right now.”

She’s a bit bubblier than her older sister, and considers herself both outgoing and talkative.

“I’m a very energetic, loud person,” Ashton Purvis said. “I’m very social...I like to laugh a lot.”

Hopefully, that energy will translate into successful results at the upcoming IAAF World Youth Track & Field Championships.