

Run, Jamie, Run

King-Prunty Makes Big Strides for Colgate Women's Track Team

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By Scott Kindberg, The Post-Journal



Jamie King-Prunty, seen running the anchor leg of the 4x400-meter relay earlier this month at the ECAC championships, was named Colgate University's Freshman of the Year. Submitted photo

As Colgate assistant coach Russ Peterson watched his 4x400-meter relay team approach the final handoff at the Patriot League Track & Field Championships earlier this month, he leaned over to the Red Raider athlete running the anchor leg and said simply, "Introduce yourself to the Patriot League."

Jamie King-Prunty did as she was told in the most impressive way possible.

A freshman from Jamestown, King-Prunty took the baton from Arielle Moylen only to find herself trailing Navy's Jess Palacio, who was ranked nationally in the 800 and 1,500.

"All I remember," King-Prunty said, "is looking up at her arms and legs and thinking, 'Man, she's moving pretty fast.'"

By the time they reached the back stretch, Palacio, who would later be named the Athlete of the Meet, had opened an 8-10 meter lead.

King-Prunty was undaunted.

"We were going around a curve and I just knew I had it," she said. "I just went."

When she crossed the finish line - Colgate's winning time was a school-record 3:51 compared to Navy's 3:51.83 - King-Prunty was mobbed by her teammates, some of whom were in tears. Peterson ultimately joined the scrum, too, but the true Kodak moment came later when King-Prunty received a hug from her mother.



Melody Prunty, Jamestown High School Class of 1985, knows all about running 400 meters. The former Michigan State scholarship athlete was a three-time TAC national champion in that event as a JHS athlete, placed in four state championships and holds the school record in the event (56.24).

King-Prunty's resume isn't as extensive as that of her mom, but she's working at it. In fact, her split on that anchor leg of the 4x400 relay at the league championships was 56:26, which is a blink-of-an-eye short of the open time her mom recorded at JHS a generation before.

Melody Prunty, Jamie's mother, was a four-time New York State place winner during her career at Jamestown High School in the 1980s. She ultimately earned a scholarship at Michigan State University. P-J file photo

"Jamie introduced herself not only to the Patriot League," Peterson said, "but also who she is to our team and what she means to it the next three years."

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King-Prunty's final season on the JHS track team was bittersweet. She was a member of the 4x100 relay that qualified for the 2010 state meet - Abby Zabrodsky, Alize Scott and Kylie Wilson were also on that relay - but a stress fracture limited her participation in other events for most of that spring.

"Every step she was in pain," said JHS assistant coach Ron Graham, who also happens to be King-Prunty's godfather.

A year later, however, she put herself all over the Colgate record book. Her efforts earned her spots on the All-Patriot League second team for the both the indoor and outdoor seasons. Along the way, she was, among other accomplishments, a member of the school record-setting 4x400 relay indoors (3:54.68) and outdoors (3:51); is the school record-holder in the open 400 (56.73) outdoors; and was selected the school's freshman of the year.

So much for stress fractures.

"I definitely learned from last year," King-Prunty said. "I was more conscious of my body. I was in the trainer's room almost as often as I'm in the library, taking care of business. I don't want to be hurt again, because it wasn't fun."

Taking care of business has been King-Prunty's mantra since she arrived at Colgate.

"She was a seasoned veteran right off the bat," Peterson said. "She didn't need to mature much. She did that all (last summer). That's a credit to her mother and her high school coach."

Making the jump from high school to college, particularly for an athlete, can be quite an adjustment.

King-Prunty apparently made the leap seamlessly.

"It was all good news when she came here," Peterson said. "She's worked hard, accepted every challenge with a smile and showed everyone how to work hard."

"She understands the training program more than some of my seniors."

Still, the hard work she's put in hasn't dampened her enthusiasm for all things Colgate.

"I truly believe that the world is my playground," she said. "I'm just a really, really big kid."

And a popular one at that.

"When you walk around campus with her," Peterson said, "she says hi to everyone. I think everybody knows who she is."

King-Prunty will return to Colgate in July where she will collaborate with another student and a biology professor on a month-long research project. She'd one day like to become a pediatrician, but not before spending some time in Italy where she'd like to teach English as a second language.

"The words, 'I can't,' aren't in my vocabulary," she said.

Noted Graham: "I think the success that she's having now in track is secondary to just how she is as a person. One thing that's always impressed me about her is Jamie has always been a determined achiever. Ever since she was a little girl she was always about getting it done."

Peterson said that the possibility of King-Prunty making the NCAA Regional cut time is on her future radar, opening up the "possibility of the national championship round." Only two other Colgate women athletes - one in swimming and one in cross country - have ever earned national berths.

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If King-Prunty does that at some point in her college career, Peterson won't have to ask for an introduction. Her place in school history will forever be secure.

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