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Paisley Simmons, High Point track and field athlete

LIFE IN THE FAST LANE



PHOTOS BY H. SCOTT HOFFMANN/News & Record

High Point Panthers runner Paisley Simmons is one of the top runners in her class in the 200-meter dash.

HIGH POINT PANTHERS RUNNER: 'EVERYONE WANTS TO WIN, DON'T THEY?'



PAISLEY SIMMONS, 13, HAS DOMINATED THE 200-METER

By ROBERT BELL
Staff Writer

GREENSBORO

Paisley Simmons has always been fast, a red-headed blur at home or on the track.

She dashes to the kitchen between commercials. Through the pews at church and the halls at school.

When she was younger — not the ripe old age of 13 that she is now — she used to take on kids of all ages in street and backyard races in High Point each

summer. When the dust settled, Paisley always emerged with the coveted title of fastest kid on the block.

These days, her competitors are a lot quicker than her cousins and neighbors. Then again, so is Paisley.

Her time of 23.72 seconds in the 200-meter dash last month is the nation's second fastest this year among her peers.

Put another way: Paisley's time is three-tenths of a second faster than West Charlotte High School senior Nyosha Bryant's winning time of 24.12 in the NCHSAA 4-A state final this year.

Most 13-year-olds would be content with the second fastest time in the nation. Paisley is not one of them. When she lines up for today's 200-meter final in the Junior Olympic National Track & Field Championships at N.C. A&T, Paisley doesn't just want to win, she wants to walk off with a record.

"I don't like second in anything," she said. "It's not that I'm a bad sport. Everyone wants to win, don't they? That's just the way I am."

Four years ago, Paisley came home

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"She's a natural sprinter. The way she just comes out of a corner is so natural."

Ken Roberts, Panthers coach

Paisley

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from school with a flyer in her hand. She told her parents, Zallo and Penny Simmons, that she wanted to run for the High Point Panthers track club.

Penny Simmons wasn't sure her daughter was up for it.

"Mom," Paisley told her, "I'm already beating all the boys in school. I want something harder."

They signed her up that week.

Panthers coach Ken Roberts took one look at Paisley's long legs and lean body and knew he had something special.

"She's a natural sprinter," he said. "The way she just comes out of a corner is so natural. It's exciting to watch her."

Paisley — her mother loves the pattern — spent the first two years with the Panthers learning technique and build-



H. SCOTT HOFFMANN/News & Record

Paisley Simmons was the most outstanding runner at the Russell E. Blunt East Coast Invitational.

ing her strength.

Only in the past two years — and this summer in particular — has she emerged as one of the nation's elite young

sprinters.

She was named the most outstanding runner at the prestigious Russell E. Blunt East Coast Invitational at Duke last week and the Jim Law Invitational in Charlotte, where she posted her fastest 200 time. She hasn't lost a 200 race all year.

"To watch her has been amazing," Roberts said. "Complete domination. I've never seen anything close to it."

Even Paisley, who begins her freshman year at Andrews later this month, is taken aback by her progress.

"At first I was shocked," she said. "I thought: Is this really happening? Now it's just something I do that comes easy."

NOTE: Greensboro's Breanna Warren finished fourth in the Youth Girls discus Friday evening with a best throw of 109 feet, 1 inch. The winning throw was 128-6.

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