

TRAILS

OLATHE EAST CROSS COUNTRY

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OFFICER JONES-ENERGY GIVER!

The last time Olathe East visited Turner was about ten years ago, and in the JV girls race, Nashona Jones got ready to run. The course at that time (new course now) featured a climb called Goat Hill where you had to get down on your hands and knees to climb the last portion. It was very, very tough and basically went straight up.

Now understand, Nashona Jones was not born cross country runner. She was a hurdler in track, and had missed going to state the previous year by a tenth of a second. She felt that cross country would help toughen her and get her physically fit, but Nashona was not at the top of the heap in cross country. But every day this senior came and worked hard, and (literally) drug herself through the workout. Hills were not her friend.

But she came up with a smile and always greeted everyone on the team every day. She made sure the freshman knew they were welcome and valued, and when her team-mates saw that hill, she scooted up it at the course walk and yelled "C'mon! It's fun!" As the race unfolded, two things happened that caught my attention. One was that a course worker became confused and started sending kids into the chute a lap early...Nashona was one of those, but she quickly realized the times they were reading didn't sound right. She ran out of the chute, and jumped back into the race. It would have been easy to finish that race early, and then blame it on the worker...but to quote Nashona "That's not the way we do things at East." The other was that as Nashona trudged on, she came on some team-mates walking. Now Nashona was a cultured young lady, but Nashona could also use language that would make a sailor blush. Some of that language got used as Nashona quickly motivated them to RUN with her. That's the way things are done at East sometime.

Come track season, Nashona, now lighter and stronger, qualified for state, and then to everyone's surprise, the state 300 hurdles final! And in a moment where we were in a tight team race, to everyone's surprise, that toughness, determination and drive she had cultivated in cross country came out and she finished in third place!!! The points were the clinchers in a Hawk State Track Championship. When asked about how she had made such a remarkable improvement, well "That's how we do things at East."

Go into the office and take a look at Chief Petty Officer Jones. Her picture is on the wall there. She now is an officer in the Navy, and I'm sure is still motivating herself and others. Sometimes with a smile, and sometimes with the language of the sailor she now is. We've had many runners at East that were faster than Nashona, but few who were able to make such a difference to everyone.

Be an energy giver Hawks.....let me write about you in the years to come.