

Crawford's efforts to 'run right' lead her to state meet, TrackTown12 camp

Youth plans ahead so things fall into place

By Diane Rodriguez

"Coach, she's going to do it."

Those words hung in the air between Siletz Valley Coach Emily McMillin and track athlete Melanie Cummiskey as they watched Tribal member Morgan Crawford glide over the hurdles in preparation for the district track meet in May.

Cummiskey, a senior at Siletz Valley Early College Academy, was referring to Crawford breaking the school record in the 300-meter hurdles, a record Cummiskey holds.

Although the record wasn't broken this year, Cummiskey and Crawford both finished their track seasons at the state meet after months of "practicing on the grass, we're practicing on the road, we're practicing on the football field, anywhere we can find, inside the hallway when it's rainy out," McMillin said, because there is no track at Siletz Valley.

Cummiskey, a senior, placed eighth in both the triple jump and high jump at the state meet. Crawford, 15, placed 10th in the 300 hurdles as a freshman.

Crawford's success on the track comes from a time when she wanted to run but couldn't. When she was in the fifth grade, track was offered to sixth-graders and a few students in the fifth grade. Crawford, however, was on crutches.

"I wrecked on my quad and I ended up getting water on my knee. I was on crutches for three-and-a-half months. It was awful and I was so jealous of the few kids that got to go out and practice with the middle school and high school," said Crawford. "In the sixth grade, kind of out of spite, I was like I want to go do it. I didn't get to do it last year. I want to do it now and then ended up having a really good time."

Crawford said one of the first things she had to do was learn to "run right" with the help of Mike McMillen.

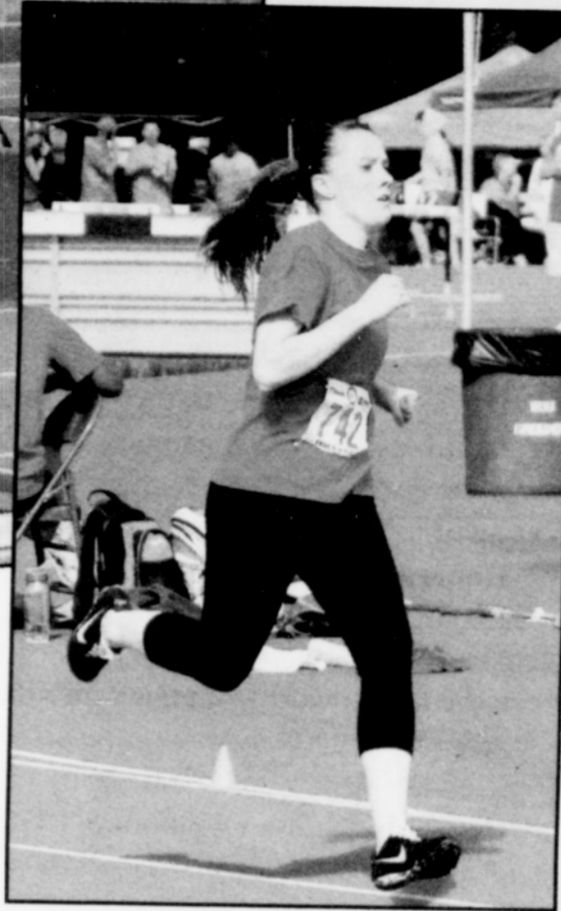
"He had to teach me how to run. He's like, 'You're running wrong.' And I'm like, 'I don't know how that's even possible. It's running,'" said Crawford. "It's like shorter steps, pumping your arms, holding your arms in. It was weird to find out all these years, I've been running wrong. I had to run a different way."

Running a different way certainly applies to the hurdles, even if you've been familiar with them since the sixth grade.



Courtesy photos

Morgan Crawford competes in the 300-meter hurdles at the district track meet. She took second place to qualify for the state meet, where she placed 10th.



TrackTown 12

Crawford's interest in track will lead her to Eugene, Ore., this month and the USA Track and Field Olympic Trials. She will participate in TrackTown12, a youth leadership camp for high school students.

When McMillin received an e-mail that included information about the camp, she immediately was excited by it.

"I remember thinking, 'I don't know what this is, but meeting with the Olympic Trials and track and leadership – those are three things I love,' so I clicked on the link and read about it. And it was like, 'OK, who can I get excited about this?' And instantly, Morgan was the one that came up," said McMillin.

"Ms. McMillin was really drilling into me – rhythm, rhythm, rhythm. I never really understood that until we set them up in the big gym one day and she said, 'OK Melanie, jump them all.' And she's like, 'Listen to her,'" said Crawford. "And it finally just clicked, that the rhythm – you have to get perfect steps. Everyone has their own certain way of stepping, but you have to figure that out to really excel in it. That's when I started understanding I have to do this and this and then take a step. So in my head, I used to go 'bum bum bum – bum bum bum' so I could remember the rhythm that I have."

Track is just one of several activities in which Crawford participates. She played basketball this year for the first time. She participates in SMILE (Science, Math, Investigative Learning Experience), leadership (planning things like the prom, Water Day, yearbook and homecoming) and the Youth Film Project (see story on page 1). She worked on the school newspaper in eighth grade.

"Our whole class got to work on it. I really liked that because I like writing," said Crawford. "I actually want to be a journalist or an English teacher. I'm juggling both because I love English so much and literature. But I also really like writing. I've still got a few years to decide."

She also has participated in the Tribal Youth Educational Employment (TYEE) summer job program and is a feather dancer.

"She's young – a freshman this year – so she's got lots of time to then use the leadership skills at our school and in the community," continued McMillin. "She loves track and I knew she had a lot of potential. She's one of those kids who leads her peers and even kids who are older than her look to her as a leader. And so she was just a natural candidate."

McMillin will be at the Olympic Trials as a volunteer helping to run the meet, although in mid-May she did not know what assignment she would have.

Crawford will attend TrackTown12 during the first of two sessions that include about 50 teenagers each. Track may be what got her there, but it's not the only thing the camp is about.

"The focus is on you as a whole person, not just a track athlete. The camp involves track athletes and non-track athletes. It focuses on the whole; it's not just a select group of people," said Crawford. "Anyone can be involved."

College on the horizon

Crawford was born and raised in Siletz and calls herself a "small town girl. I don't do well in big cities." Going to college might change this, but the ability to earn dual credits at Siletz Valley and Oregon Coast Community College could put the big city off for awhile.

"This is something I really want to look at in my junior and senior years so I can get a lot of credits out of the way. It's such a good opportunity because it's so close," said Crawford.

Going to college also means looking for scholarships.

"There's a lot of things I'm doing now, which is why I'm also doing SMILE, because it's a really good way to get scholarships. There can be really good opportunities if you just look for them. I'm the person who plans ahead," said Crawford. "It's like everything, like the TrackTown thing, looks like a lot of fun and then wait, this would look good on a college application. It's kind of exciting to look at the different possibilities and it's like everything kind of falls into place."

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