

Black & Gold

Williams to compete for Murray State

By Daniel L. Chamness
 Alyssa Williams' athletic and academic talent allows her to attend almost any college she wants.
 The thing that all the colleges/universities that she narrowed it down to had in common: they were all NCAA Division I schools. All three military academies were courting her as were six other schools.
 But, Murray State University, a school, which competes in the Ohio Valley Conference, impressed Williams the most.
 "Coach Adam Keisler built a relationship with my family and I," said Williams for her top reason in picking the Racers. "He saw me as a person first and consistently communicated with me. He came to my football games and welcomed me to the Racer family atmosphere. For my first year, I will work to find a role that helps my team and improve my skills to start performing at a higher level. Long term, I think the sky is the limit."
 Williams earned the spot on the Murray State team on the strength of her junior season. She is just opening her senior season of track and field. Her sophomore year was canceled due to COVID. But, her junior season ended with four

medals, three of which were individual gold medals. She would win the 100-meter dash, the 200-meter dash, the long jump and would be a member of the 800-meter relay, which took sixth.
 "I will always remember that as the year I had the chance to compete, without being hindered by injury or a pandemic," said Williams of her junior season. "This year, I just want to have fun this year with my teammates and make some memories. Many people from Tuscola have helped me get here. I have had the benefit of the coaching of not only Drew Sterkel, but Tracy Hornaday. She keeps us on task at practice, brings a ton of positive energy and experience. She is awesome and track would not be the same or as enjoyable without her."
 Academically, Williams plans on majoring in Kinesiology. The daughter of Lisa Smith currently carries a grade point average of 3.45 and is a constant on the honor roll. She is or has also a member of Students Against Drunk Driving, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Future Farmers of America and Drama Club during her time at Tuscola.
 "Our trainer (Meghan) treated me quite a bit as a

freshman athlete," said Williams. "She is one of the huge reasons that I want to major in Kinesiology. I owe a great deal of my success to her. She is an awesome person and I dedicate many of my performances to her. Much of my growth as a young adult has taken place here and I feel like it has prepared me to adapt to new environments/situations and overcome adversity. I will between four and five hours away from home. I will miss my friends and all the people that helped me along the way."
 There are several milestones that Williams could achieve to become the most decorated track athlete of all time at Tuscola. Presently, only five Lady Warriors have three gold medals from the state track and field meet. Besides Williams, Tracy Baird, now known as Tracy Hornaday, Kim Sluder, Patty McDaniel and Kim Von Laken each have three. In addition, only one athlete, that being Johanna Wienke, who has garnered five medals, two of which are individual golds in the discus, in the weight events. Williams has four total medals.
 Away from the track, she has also been a football player and has also been a manager on the basketball team.



ALYSSA WILLIAMS (seated, center) is all smiles after inking her National Letter of Intent to run college track for the Murray State University Racers. Pictured with her are Tuscola girls coach Drew Sterkel (left), Williams, Lisa Smith, Williams' mother. Standing are Tuscola throws coach Stan Wienke, Tuscola assistant track coach Tracy Hornaday and Ryan Hornaday, Tuscola head boy's coach and athletic director. Photo by Daniel L. Chamness.

At her new college home, the Racers recently won the Ohio Valley Conference Indoor Championship. Since 2018, they have been in the top three teams in the women's division, both indoor and outdoor, in the OVC in every contested conference meet.
 At the collegiate level,

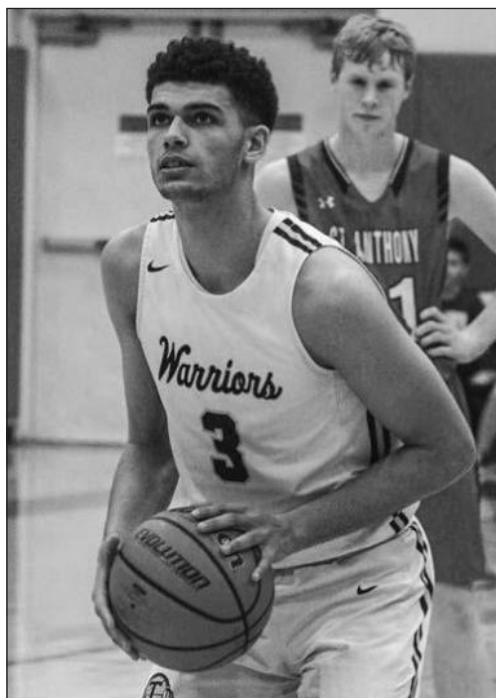
Williams might have an opportunity to compete in a few other events. The senior stated that numerous coaches see her as a multi-event athlete, with the possibility of making her a heptathlete. She is also looking forward to possibly running the distance medley relay or the sprint medley relay.

"My favorite event is the pole vault," said Williams. "The mechanics of it are beautiful and I like watching it. Sprinting has its own beauty and the 400-meter is another race I do not specialize in, but I really enjoy watching it when it runs at a high, competitive level."

Tuscola

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did not score in double figures in the first quarter, he did have eight. The Bulldogs boasted a 15-13 lead at the first break. They would hold the Warriors to just nine points in the second quarter and would hold a four point edge at the end of the half.
 The two teams each posted 12 points in the third quarter to set up the Tuscola dramatic comeback in the final four minutes of the game.
 "I felt a bit of relief when Colton hit that free throw," said Quinn. "It made up for the free throw that I missed earlier. "When I was sitting on the bench, I was a little down on myself. But, I had faith in them. It put some additional pressure on them. I am so glad that we are moving on. I am proud and happy we are moving on."



JALEN QUINN EYES the bucket as he prepares to shoot a free throw against Effingham St. Anthony in the opening round of the IHSA Class 1A Sectional hosted by the St. Anthony Bulldogs at Enlow Center. Photo by Daniel L. Chamness.

Tuscola opens indoor season with limited competitors

By Daniel L. Chamness
 The Tuscola Lady Warrior girls team was not at full strength when they competed at the Eastern Illinois University High School Indoor Track and Field Meet at Lantz Fieldhouse in Charleston.
 Even though they did not have a full team, they were able to show their strength. The Tuscola Warriors took fifth with 35 points, largely behind the 30 points scored by Alyssa Williams.
 The senior, who recently committed to run for the Murray State University Racers next year, won three events in the 40 team meet. On the track she won the 200-meter dash by almost a second. In the indoor one lap sprint, she dashed to the finish line in

26.11 seconds. Belleville East's Taktia Tiller took second in :27.09.
 "Alyssa has been nothing but incredible both on the track and as a leader," said Drew Sterkel, Tuscola's head girl's coach. "I have been impressed by her leadership skills and her approach to rallying her teammates."
 She defeated Tiller in the 60-meter dash as well. The outdoor state champion was the only athlete in the meet to break eight seconds. She finished the race in :07.76. Tiller took second in :08.05.
 "Overall, I have been extremely happy and encouraged by our team this year," said Sterkel. "We have a group of athletes that are great at lifting them up and holding them ac-

countable, both in and out of the classroom. We have not had many opportunities to get outside. But, when we have, we have taken advantage of it."
 Williams also won the long jump in the field events, leaping 5.13 meters. Columbia's Abby Venhaus took second with 5.05 meters.
 The other five points were scored by Natalie Hasting. The sophomore shot putter took fourth with an effort of 31 feet, 9.5 inches.
 A total of 36 teams posted a score at the meet. Mt. Zion won the meet with 77 points. The other teams ahead of the Lady Warriors were Tolono Unity (50.5 points), Belleville

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