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Off to a gold start
NC freshman Dunchack wins AA high jump
 By Philip Cmor, pcmor@altoonamirror.com



SHIPPENSBURG — They're in the midst of a massive building project just behind the visiting bleachers at Shippensburg University's Seth Grove Stadium.

Inside the field confines on Friday, Northern Cambria's Janae Dunchack began building what promises to be a special high school track and field career.

Rebounding from disappointment in the long jump and the 100-meter dash in the morning, Dunchack, a freshman, came back to take the gold medal in the Class AA high jump on the first day of the PIAA Track and Field Championships.

Dunchack was one of three girls to jump 5 feet, 3 inches, but she won because she had fewer misses than Elk County Catholic's Laura Straub and Hughesville's Rebekah Newhart, both seniors.

"I'm still trying to absorb it," the very cool and collected Dunchack said after the medal presentation. "It's really a big honor to come here with all these talented athletes and win."

Dunchack smiled and played with an aqua rubber ball she recently bought as she waited to take the awards stand. Then, she got to admire her new trophy.

"It's really shiny," Dunchack said. "I'd like to get some more. I'm going to try to work very hard the next three years."

Maybe, by the time she graduates, Dunchack will hear her first name pronounced correctly. It's pronounced "Jan-AY," but she has been called "Jane-ee" through districts and states. The name was even misspelled in the program.

"They might make it worse, actually," Dunchack said.

While her name might not be known, Dunchack herself is already a well-known commodity. She joined the Lady Colt varsity team having won eight gold medals in the District 6 Junior High Track Championships over two years.

This one, though, was different to her.

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"This one is going to get a special place. It means a lot more to me," Dunchack said.

Earlier in the day, Dunchack had posted an 11th-place finish in the long jump after being seeded second. She jumped 16-31/2, but needed 16-5 to get into the finals. Then she finished sixth in her 100-meter dash heat and out of the semifinals with a time of 13.11 seconds. After the gold-medal effort, Dunchack finished seventh in her 200 dash heat, crossing the line in 27.84.

"After the long jump, I was just devastated, and, in the 100, I expected to be a little bit better," Dunchack said. "In the high jump, I thought I could bring it all together there. High jump is just my favorite event. You don't have to do a whole lot of running. It's just watching your form."

Just a sophomore herself, Philipsburg-Osceola's Kaylee Adams also had a disappointing start to her day, placing 22nd in the long jump with her best effort of 15-3. She was able to rebound, though, to get her first PIAA medal by tying four other girls for eighth in the high jump at 5-0.

Adams actually thought she had been eliminated from medal contention.

"I feel great. I didn't think I was going to place at first," Adams said. "I thought I wouldn't place at all. Then the (official) came over and said, 'You're still going to get a medal. You're tied for eighth' and I'm like, 'Yeah!'"

Adams wasn't as pleased with her performance. Her personal-record is 5-3.

"It was OK. I could have done better," said Adams. "I was pressured because I'm doing all three jumps, and I was worried I wouldn't do good."

Despite the potential to do very well in the Class AA long jump, none of the area's three young competitors made the finals. In addition to Dunchack and Adams, Bedford sophomore Brandy Harris, who jumped 18-0 during the season, was 17th at 15-9.

Philadelphia Masterman's Asha Jaramogi won with a 17-113/4. Her seeded jump was only 16-7, good for 17th in the field of 24.

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