

Timauntay Jones aiming for 800 at Drake

Written by Jim Ecker

Monday, 23 April 2012 21:54 -

Timauntay Jones has the Drake Relays on his mind.

He goes to sleep and thinks about Drake. He's sitting in class at Jefferson High School and thinks about Drake. He tries to do his homework and, well, you get the idea.

He thinks about Drake.

"It's on my mind all the time," Jones said Monday afternoon before practice at Kingston Stadium. "I mean, I can be sitting in class and paying attention and I start thinking about it."

Jones, just a junior but already one of the top half-milers in the state, will compete in the prestigious Drake Relays on Friday in the sprint medley, 800 meter run and 4x400 relay.

"It's a dream come true. It really is," he said about his first trip to the Drake Relays as a contestant.

The 800 is his speciality. He finished seventh at the Class 4A state meet last year as a sophomore and posted a personal best of 1:57.60 during the 2011 campaign.

He's already clocked a 1:56.90 this season and is ranked No. 2 in the state entering the Drake Relays behind Conner Smock of Lisbon, who is just a tick ahead of him at 1:56.84.

The 800 meter run on Friday could be one of the most intriguing prep events at Drake and one of the best for Metro runners. Jabez Walker of Linn-Mar is ranked fourth at 1:57.28 and Robert Hogg of Washington is 10th at 1:58.01, just 1.17 seconds behind Smock.

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"I think there are a handful of them that could finish anywhere from first to eighth," said Jefferson Coach Ron Tower.

Jones, slightly built at 5-foot-7 and 125 pounds, is one of those guys who could finish first. Tower thinks the key will be a good start, because he thinks getting stuck at the back of a pack could be trouble with all those good runners.

Tower is anxious to see what happens. And make no mistake, he loves to watch Jones run.

"There's no question he's got a lot of talent, but he's so smooth. He's efficient," said Tower. "If you watch him on the track, there's no wasted energy."

Tower remembers the first time he met Jones. It was two years ago, when Jones was a freshman and shooting baskets in the Jefferson gym, and it still makes him laugh. Tower sidled up to Jones and wondered if he was a runner.

"Yeah," Jones told the coach, "and I'm a good one, too."

Jones comes from a track family. Both of his parents ran track and his uncle, Anthony Hurt, was the state champion in the 400-meter dash for Davenport Central in 1994 in a swift 49.08 seconds.

Jones feels confident about his chances at Drake after performing well at the state meet last year. "I've been to state and I've competed with all those guys, and it just shows I can do it again this year," he said.

Jones likes the schedule of races on Friday. He'll run the 800 anchor leg on the sprint medley at 10:40 a.m., then have plenty of time to recover for the open 800 at 2:28 p.m. He'll finish the day in the prelims of the 4x400 relay at 8:35 p.m.

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He's looking forward to running the anchor on the sprint medley and seeing how well the J-Hawks can do. He thinks it will help get him ready for the open 800 as well. "That should be a good warmup," he said.

Jones has an excellent chance of breaking an ancient school record in the 800 meter run before he graduates. Ralph Trimble set the school mark in 1959 in the old 880 yard dash, and Trimble's time converts to 1:55.4 for the metric version of the event. Jones is sitting at 1:56.9, just 1.5 seconds behind Trimble, as he chases a 53-year-old mark.

"The school record has been around for a long, long time. It goes way back," Tower noted. "It's been a long time since we've had anybody of this quality. The sky's the limit."

Tower thinks Jones could reach 1:55 this year. "I do think it's within reason," the coach said. "He's got the training behind him."

Ask Jones what his best time might be this spring and he responds in similar fashion. "Maybe 1:55. I don't know. Maybe lower than 1:55. It depends."

Tower thinks Jones might reach 1:52 or 1:53 in the 800 before he's done at Jefferson.

"I don't want to put a cap on him at all," said Tower. "He works. He had a mission coming into this season. He had a picture of what he wanted to do. And one of them was to get the school record this year."

Jones is not worried about the school record this week. The Drake Relays are on his mind, first and foremost.

"It's going to be tough," he said. "I think I can hang with them. We've worked so hard. It's going

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to be a good race."

He's not sure if the 800 will be a speed race or a strategic race, but he plans to be ready either way. "I think for the Drake Relays, it's going to be all or nothing."