

New Mexico Activities Association Student-Athlete Spotlight



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Hill Fueled by a Competitive Drive

By Tyler Dunkel, NMAA Director of Sports Information

Taea Hill, a junior at Ramah High School, thrives on competition. During the 2014-15, Hill had great success both as an individual and as a member of the Mustang athletic teams.

Hill was the High-Point Athlete at the 2014 NMAA State Track & Field meet in class 2A, winning the triple jump, the 100-hurdles and the 300-hurdles, while running on two top-5 relay teams. She alone scored 23.5 of her team's 43 points in the meet, helping the Mustangs take second place.

"I had won all my hurdle races during the season last year going into the state meet, except for one in the final meet of the regular season. It was kind of disappointing but it made me more determined and hungry to win at the state championships."

She continued by saying, "In the triple jump, it came down to me and another athlete. We were neck and neck during the entire event and on my last jump of the competition I recorded my best jump of the year and won. The next day, I ran the hurdles events. I think winning the triple jump really helped me focus for those two races and I came out on top, running my best times as well. It was a great feeling."

She continued by helping her team win the 2014 NMAA 2A State Volleyball Championship, the first for Ramah since 2005. The Mustangs finished the season 23-0. On the basketball court, Hill and the Mustangs went 22-6 in 2014-15, making the state quarterfinals.

"In 2014 I wasn't expecting to have a great season but, as the season went on, Coach Clawson and I realized that I had a good chance to do something special. At the state meet, I won the 100 and 300 hurdles and the triple jump, while finishing second as a team. It was a great experience. In Volleyball, our team won the 2A state championship, going undefeated. I think in both Track and Volleyball we had great team chemistry. Growing up together in the same town has really helped us become like family."

Despite her success as an individual last season in track, Hill says that it was equally gratifying to help her team take home the second place trophy. "It was important to me personally, as well as a dream come true, to win both hurdles events and the triple jump but on the other hand it was equally as important to me that I helped my team compete for a state title. Even though we didn't finish first it was a great accomplishment and we hope



to bring home the blue trophy this year.”

This year, Hill hopes to repeat as champion in the triple jump and in the hurdle events but says the competition is much tougher, something she is looking forward to. “I’ve really been focused this year on trying to repeat in the hurdles and the triple jump. I think this year the competition in the hurdles will be more of a challenge than last year. I’m looking forward to the challenge. I like to be pushed in my events because I feel it makes me a better competitor.”

Over the last few years, the Ramah Mustangs have begun to assert themselves as a 2A program that will contend for state titles but Hill thinks they can compete with anyone. “We have started a winning tradition at Ramah. I think it shows that Ramah, regardless of classification, is a school that can compete with anyone in the state. Our teams put in the time and hard work just like everybody else does and it pays off in the end.”

Hill said that her competitive drive and work ethic in sports and the classroom comes from what she has learned from her parents, Jaywhon and Melinda Herron, both teachers at the elementary school in Ramah. “My parents have always supported me in everything I do. I think my work ethic comes from them. They both played high school sports and were great students. They push me to be better. I have two great examples to follow. Both my parents are teachers at the elementary school in Ramah.”

She also said that her coach, Austin Clawson, has also been a great support and credits him with teaching her not only about being a strong competitor but about life. “Coach Clawson has been a really great coach for me. He is like family and I don’t know what I would do without him. Coach Clawson has taught me so much about life and sports, while being there for me when I needed him.”

Although Hill is just a junior, she is already thinking about her future and hopes to continue her academic and track career in college. She currently carries a 4.0 GPA. “My academics are extremely important. I know if I want to go to college that I will need to be focused in the classroom. I want to run track in college, hopefully in either Arizona or Colorado, but if I had a good opportunity I would go to college in New Mexico.”

Hill, the oldest of three, also provides guidance to her two younger sisters by setting a good example for them to follow. “I have one sister, an eighth grader, who runs track and plays volleyball and basketball with me. It’s great to have her alongside me. My other sister is a ninth grader and it’s funny to help both of them and motivate them in life to be a better woman.”

Outside of sports and school, Hill enjoys dancing and singing and can be heard singing the National Anthem prior to football and basketball home games. Hill’s competitive drive has resulted in much success thus far at Ramah and will continue to do so for years to come well after her Mustang days are behind her.