

New Generation: Shardia Lawrence - Triple Jump Chose Me



Shardia Lawrence is in love with the triple jump, and she says the event chose her. It is a match made in track and field heaven with results that have put Lawrence in line to join Jamaica's cadre of top triple jumpers.

Formerly of Vere Technical, Hydell High and Kansas State University, she won the 2019 NCAA title with a last round personal best of 13.99 metres. The mark moved her up to joint sixth in the Jamaica all-time performance list. It also gave her an accolade to match the likes of 2005 World Champion Trecia Smith, 2018 World Indoor runner-up Kimberly Williams and Shanieka Ricketts, the 2019 World Championship silver medallist.

Starting with Suzette Lee in 1996 and 1997, 7 Jamaicans have taken top honours in the event at the NCAA Outdoor Championship. The others include Smith, Williams and Ricketts, who won in 2013 and 2014.

Now in Florida to escape the snow at her Chicago training base, the 25 year-old Lawrence became a triple jumper by accident. "Boy, triple jump chose me. It was fate. I was always a sprinter. I went to Vere Technical as a sprinter and a long jumper and I did awesome because I jumped 5.2 in class 4, 5.8 in class 3 so I was a good long jumper until I think I went to the Carifta Games and I messed up", she said of an experience in Montego Bay in 2011.

She missed the long jump but without any real preparation, she placed second in the triple to Yanis David, the French girl she would beat at the NCAA Championship. Injury to a Vere teammate ushered her into the event and she steadily improved. By 2013, she had moved up from 11.36 metres in 2011 to 12.99 metres and gold at the Carifta Games.

"I was doing both but the triple was messing with long jump but then I was getting greater at triple so I was like okay then I'll focus on this and do long jump as a backup to get points", she recalled of her exploits at Vere and Hydell under the guidance of coach Joseph Wilkie. Her progression at Kansas State took her close to 14 metres.

Now she is entranced by the event in which Smith, Williams and Ricketts have excelled. Speaking with bubbly candor, Lawrence revealed, "Yeah, I love it. That's my baby, I tell you, and right now, to be honest, I'm not even in a relationship. Whenever people see me, they say, hey pretty girl, you're supposed to be in a relationship. I say no. Triple jump is my relationship. Track is my relationship. I'm going to be great at it and I know I have to make sacrifices."

The God fearing twin of discus thrower Shadae is encouraged by the success of those who have gone before her. "I'm really impressed because we really don't get much recognition and to see all the ladies excel like that is really big motivation for me", she recorded, "and they're really inspirational and I really am proud of them and I'm hoping that one day, not hoping, but I know that one day I'll be there too."