

Burkholder, Lyles steal the spotlight

By Reuben Frank
BCT sports writer

rfrank@phillyburbs.com

PENNSAUKEN — After a dazzling performance by Cherokee High School's Lisa Burkholder in the 1,600 meters at yesterday's Olympic Conference Track and Field Championships, Cherokee distance coach Chris Tarello pulled senior Malia Lyles aside and told her not to let the precocious freshman upstage her.

"He told me, 'Don't let a freshman have all the glory,'" Lyles said. "She's a great runner

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and I'm happy she's doing well. It definitely motivates me, seeing how well she's running."

Soon after Burkholder won the 1,600 in 5:12.4, fastest this spring by a South Jersey girl, Lyles won the 3,200 with a big personal-best of 11:18.2, the second-fastest time by a South Jersey girl this spring.

Lyles stalked leader Katie Van Horn of Triton most of the race before passing her with 200 meters left. The two sprinted stride-for-stride for about 150 meters before Lyles pulled away.

"We hit the 200 and I just turned into a sprinter," Lyles said. "I wasn't sure what kind of speed she had, but I felt confident. I felt strong at the end. My coaches have been telling me it's a lot easier to follow than to lead and they were right."

Lyles' time is a school record and ranks her 10th in county history. As strong as she looked, it's easy to see why she believes she can join Deanna Germano, Meghan Hughes and Colleen Sunderland as the only county girls to run sub-11.

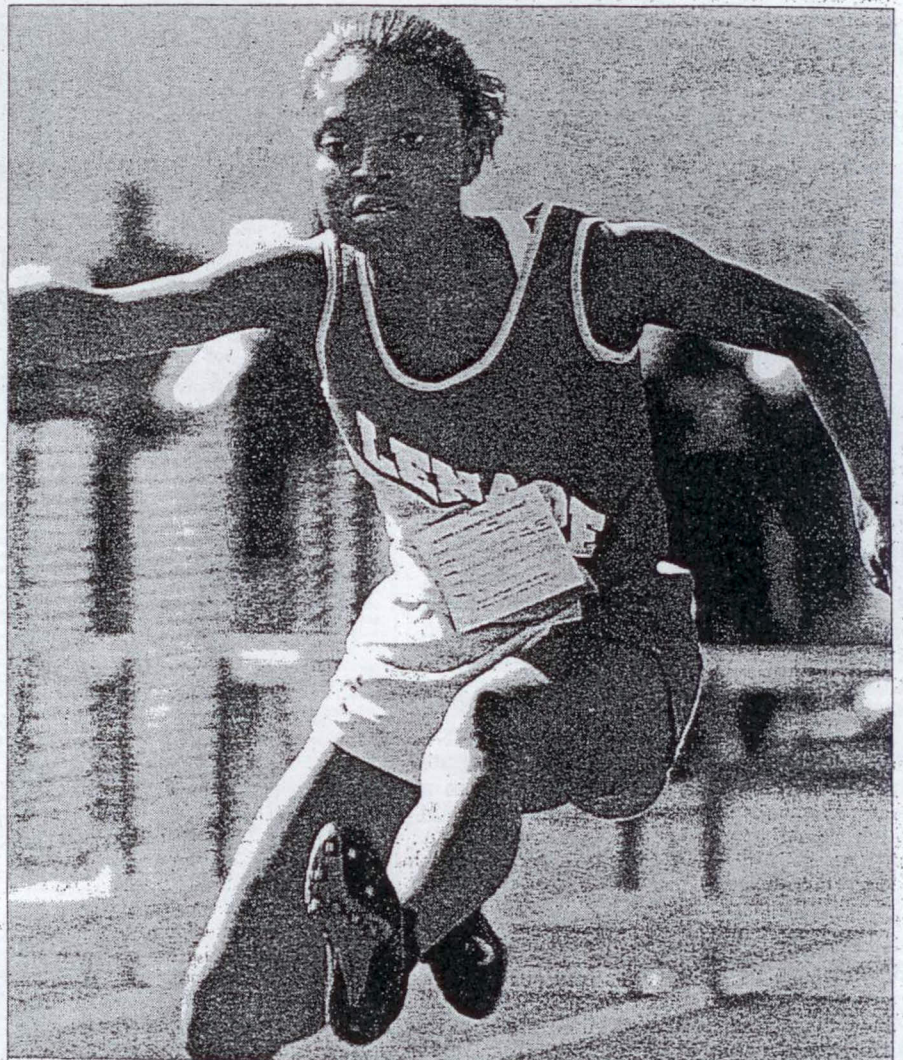
"I think I have a chance to go under 11," said Lyles, a second-team all-state cross country runner. "I think I'm going to keep getting better. Anything is possible."

Burkholder's performance was just as impressive, maybe more considering she's only been competing in track for a few months. She ran a similar race strategically as Lyles, sitting patiently and kicking on the final lap.

For Burkholder, the victim was Wilson's top-seeded Takeesha Carter. Burkholder swept past Carter coming off the turn at 1,300 meters and closed in 72 seconds, winning by 45 meters in a race she trailed with 300 to go.

"Coach (Tarello) told me to go with 300 to go, and he always has good advice," Burkholder said. "I felt pretty confident the whole race. I felt like I was going to win. I always try to finish strong. That's when all my adrenaline is really going."

Burkholder is already the third-fastest freshman in county history (behind Willingboro's Brittnee Bynoe, who ran 5:06 this winter, and Moorestown's Katie Ryan,



PENNSAUKEN

BCT staff photo/NANCY FOKOS

Lenape High School's Krystalyn Jones clears the hurdles during the 400 intermediate hurdles at yesterday's Olympic Conference Track and Field Championships.

who ran 5:12.24 in 1994). And she's only run the mile three times in major meets.

"My goal at the beginning of the season was trying to run under 5:40," she said. "Now I guess my goal is trying to run under 5:10 or maybe faster. I am surprised. I expected to do OK, but I didn't expect this."

Shawnee junior Abby Campbell, fresh off a 10-day school trip to Europe, cleared 5-6 in the high jump to win by four inches. She took three decent tries at a personal-best of 5-8½, which would have been the best jump by a county girl in 22 years.

"I'm starting to feel like my old self," said Campbell, who cleared 5-8 last year. "I just got back from 10 days in Italy and Greece on a school trip and my legs feel rested. I was struggling with shin splints, but the time off really helped them. I'm just really happy to be back where I was. It's about time."

Also on the comeback trail is Shawnee junior Danielle O'Reilly, who won the pole vault at 9-6, well short of her PR (12-0) but not bad considering she just missed two weeks with mono.

"I still don't have all my strength back, but

I'm getting back into it," she said. "I'm still kind of weak, but I feel stronger than last week."

Cherokee senior Ariel Brockman had a fast sprint double, winning the 100 in 11.8 and placing fourth in the 200 in 24.8. The 100 time would be fourth fastest in county history and the 200 time eighth, but both times were aided by a strong tailwind.

Shawnee sophomore Tabatha Haskins won the triple jump at 35-0¾, breaking her own meet record of 33-0¾, and placed third in the long jump (16-7½), fourth in the high hurdles (14.7) and sixth in the discus (97-4).

Teammate Diana Mack won the shot put with a personal-best 37-4½, took third in the javelin with a PR 111-9 and was fourth in the discus at 100-0.

Also for Shawnee, Robin McDowell ran a PR 5:22.7 for third in the 1,600, Kim Bonner was third in the 3,200 in 11:38.2 and Rachel Jochem placed in the triple jump, pole vault and 400.

Lenape's Tiffany Barbour was fourth in the javelin at 109-9 and teammate Robin Barnett ran 12.4 in the 100.