

Quick Questions With Tyler Jackson Of Cherokee

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Apr 10, 2020

Tyler Jackson

Vital stats: 17, 5-7, 135

Major accomplishment: Jackson won the unseeded heat of the 1600 meters in 4:18.83, a five-second personal best, at the NJSIAA indoor Meet of Champions last month.

He was determined the overall winner of the 1600 after meet officials rang the bell -- signifying the final lap -- one lap too early for the seeded heat, and the ensuing confusion caused the runners to stop and start again. The NJSIAA later determined that Liam Murphy of Allentown was the winner of the 1,400 meters (3:37.40).

Jackson was a wild card entrant for the MOCs after placing seventh in Group 4 the week prior in 4:23.41.

"That (MOCs) time was huge for me. I always felt I could do it," Jackson said. "My junior year I began thinking I should be running with faster people, but I had trouble early on working out my tactics. I have to give credit to Coach Shak (Steve Shaklee). He helped me through my problems."

On the MOCs 1600 controversy: "(Being awarded the 1600 title) didn't feel completely deserved. I wasn't ecstatic about the win. It was a weird position to be in.

"It was an odd situation that screwed a lot of people. I felt we should have scratched the whole thing. I wasn't in the track area after my race -- I was warming down when the second heat was running -- so I was completely oblivious until people were talking about it.

"It's very clear that the quality of the second heat was much higher, and they shouldn't have to share honors with the first heat. Based on their splits, it's very clear that Shaw (Powell of Christian Brothers) and Liam (Murphy of Allentown) were closing way faster than anything in the first heat. Liam is so crazy, he stopped and heard he had to run another lap and he still ran 4:17. That just shows they were doing something pretty nice. They were the race to watch. If they didn't stop, my 4:18 might have barely gotten into the top six."

Training schedule:

- Sunday -- "I'm not a high mileage guy so I don't do the long run all at once. I'll do 10 miles early and then 5 later in the day."
- Monday -- easy 6 and 4 miles. "The 6 is a little harder and 4 really easy, just getting your legs spinning."
- Tuesday -- aerobic workout, range from tempo or progression miles to fartleks.
- Wednesday -- 6 and 4 miles
- Thursday -- aerobic workout
- Friday -- recovery day or 6 and 4.
- Saturday -- recovery day if Friday wasn't
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Beginnings:

"I got into track in eighth grade because of a recommendation from my wrestling coach. It was the first sport I was pretty good at. I did 100, 200 and long jump, and I did pretty well in the middle school championships.

"What got me into distance running is, in middle school the high school coaches came to our middle school to talk to us and on the day we were signing up for track I told them I was interested in distance running and they said aren't you a sprinter? I said excuse me, I'm a man of many talents!"

Jackson ran cross-country all four years at Cherokee under Shaklee, with his best 5K time last fall coming in the South Jersey, Group 4 meet (16:12). Jackson was Cherokee's No. 3 man (15th, 16:34) in fueling his team's run to the Group 4 state title at Holmdel Park. He ran 16:47 in Cherokee's fourth-place effort at the MOCs.

"Over the years I've progressed and really knocked down my times. In ninth grade I was doing the 400 mainly and my secondary was the 800. My junior year I really stuck with Shak for winter and spring and that year I ran 4:25 for 1600 and my 800 was down to 1:56."

Epiphany: Jackson ran 16:49 as a junior at the Olympic Conference Championships at Dream Park in Logan Township.

"I was tossed on the team so we could have 12 people run in the varsity race and out of nowhere I cut 45 seconds off my time and I'm the sixth man on the team. From there I started to be a main guy on the varsity roster.

Self-quarantine: "I'm pretty keen with staying home. It's more comfortable for me than other people. It stinks having to stay in but I'm not having a bad of a time like other people are. I'm not that busy on a regular night. I like to run and most of my time is spent reading, talking online, playing video games every now and then."

College: University of North Dakota, focusing on forensic psychology. "I'm very much a winter guy so I'm looking forward to some frosty days up there."

Birthday dinner: "I love myself some Cracker Barrel pancakes."

Pre-meet meal: "Toast and half banana, and the other half if something gets delayed. I'm not a morning guy. I keep it simple."

Dream vacation: "I would definitely be going to Japan. It seems like it has such an interesting culture. I'm a history nerd and I always wanted to experience it. It seems like a unique place, a lot different than anywhere else in the world."

Superpower: "It would be cool to control the elements like in the movie 'The Last Airbender.' I would love to control fire and water."

Dinner for four: Jackson's guests would include...

Northern Arizona University men's and women's cross-country and track and field coach Mike Smith: "I've seen a lot of interviews and he seems like a fun guy to be in a conversation with."

Sir Isaac Newton: "He invented calculus as a super young college kid. I like intellectual conversation with people. I like people who get my brain thinking."

NJ great Edward Cheserek, who owns the Holmdel Park course record of 14:53 set in 2011: "I'd love to get to know that guy and how it felt to run under 15 minutes at Holmdel. Also, his training. When you see him run he's fun to watch, his legs turn over so fast and he's got that forward lean going. He is so inspiring for me -- I'm a tiny guy and he's built like me."