

1) Name: Courtney Ackerman

2) New Trier sport(s): Cross Country and Track & Field

3) Suburb you lived in (when you went to New Trier): Wilmette

4) What year did you graduate NT: 2013

5) Where do you live now: Urbana, IL, but moving to Chicago in a few months

6) Who was your coach: John Burnside, Robert Spagnoli

7) HS sports accomplishments/awards/honors:

- Team cross country state champs in 2011, 4-time all-state medalist in cross country
- 6-time all-state medalist in track
- Set the school records in the 1600m, 3200m, and 4x800m relay (2013 IL State Champion)
- Illinois Gatorade Runner of the Year, 2012-13

8) Favorite high school *individual sports* memory:

I loved the state track meets at Eastern Illinois University. I remember that track always felt bigger (of course it wasn't) and more important than any high school track. At every state meet, it was significantly hotter than it had been in Winnetka so it felt like the start of summer and my extended family would come to the meets, so it was a great opportunity to spend time with them. Even though it was the biggest race of the track season, it felt more like a fun gathering. It was also fun to spend time with the sprinters who qualified, because distance runners don't get a chance to interact with them as much in practice.

9) Favorite high school *team* memory:

We had a somewhat unique racing strategy, courtesy of Coach Burnside, where we would run the first mile of our 3-mile cross country races pretty conservatively and then surge when we hit the mile marker. I think that strategy really brought us together as a team, because we had a lot of fun passing people in the second and third miles. Even though we weren't always running right next to our teammates, it was fun to think of them surging at the same time.

10) Who was your biggest team rival or individual rival in HS, and where did they go to school? My twin sister, same school! It was always in good fun, but I enjoyed racing against her and she was a great training buddy and kept me motivated.

11) Favorite class and/or teacher at NT: Chemistry with Mr. Forbes

12) Where did you attend college? University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

13) Compare your HS sports experience to your college experience:

I was injured for pretty much all of my collegiate career so it's really not a fair comparison. But I can still say that running at a D1 school was certainly different than in high school. The coaches want you to consider it a job and take it very seriously, which is understandable considering we were trying to compete at a very high level. Occasionally, I'd find myself missing the constant fun we had in high school running. Yes we worked hard, but there wasn't that added level of expectation hanging over everyone's heads.

14) College sports accomplishments:

I competed in one Big Ten indoor track meet before I was medically disqualified from the team, after having too many stress fractures. So I guess just that one meet!

15) Favorite college sports moments:

I loved hanging out in the training room before and after practice. I had to spend a lot of time there for treatment and exercises, but the staff and the athletes made it a fun, friendly environment.

16) Area of study: Civil Engineering in undergrad

17) What do you do now? I am finishing up my Master's degree in Environmental Engineering.

18) What would you do differently if you could do it again?

I would listen to my body. There were several times in high school that I ran through the pain with a good idea that it may have been the start of a stress fracture. But I had so much fun running that I didn't want to give up any meets. Now I realize that it would have been much smarter to take a few days off and make sure to prioritize my health.





