

- 1) Name: Mimi Smith
- 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: 2015
- 5) Where do you live now?

Moving to Durham, North Carolina in August to receive my Doctor of Physical Therapy Degree at Duke University

- 6) Who were your coaches? John Burnside-XC, Burnside/Spagnoli-Track
- 7) HS sports accomplishments/awards/honors:

- A part of the 2011 Cross Country State Championship Team for the first time in history for New Trier
- All State for Cross Country 4 years in a row (2011- 10th place, 2012- 12th place, 2013- 1st place, 2014- 8th place)
- 2013 Individual Cross Country Champion
- A part of 2011 and 2012 team Nike Cross Nationals qualifier and Individual qualifier in 2013. Team placed 4th at Nationals in 2011 and 14th in 2012. Individually finished 30th in 2011, 23rd in 2012, and 33rd in 2013.
- A part of 2013 4x800m relay team that won a state championship and school record time of 9:04
- All state in the 1600m in 2013 with 9th place finish
- All state in the 3200m in 2014 with 3rd place and in 2015 with 5th place finish
- Personal Bests: 1600m □ 4:59, 3200m □ 10:41, Cross Country 3mile □ 16:43
- One of four students to receive J Kyle Braid Leadership Award
- 2014 Cross Country Team Captain

- 8) Favorite high school *individual sports* memory:

My favorite individual sport memory was winning state my Junior year in Cross Country. Although choosing a state victory as a favorite memory is pretty cliché, that moment and victory meant a lot to me because of how the race strung out. I didn't lead the race from the gun. In fact, I was all the way back in 15th place at the first mile. Over the course of those next two miles, I was patient yet aggressive, eventually getting down to the final straight away neck and neck with a girl who had beaten me earlier that season. She was a freshman, much shorter and much smaller than me with my muscular composition. I used power, however, to out run her in the last 600m by two seconds for a state championship finish. The reason I think that win was so big for my personal confidence and maybe even the sport of running in Illinois is I wasn't expected to win nor did I fit the typical figure or appearance of most phenomenal high school runners. That race taught me that no matter who you are, what natural talent you have, or who you're up against, your success is determined by your effort, consistency and mindset. Nothing is too far out of reach if you work hard enough to go chase it down.

- 9) Favorite high school *team* memory:

My favorite team memory is the Post-State Meet tradition we had on the bus rides home. We all would pick a song that motivated us or that we thought represented our season. We would then play each song, starting with the youngest working our way up to the oldest, out loud so everyone on the bus could hear. Sometimes singing along, and other times silently listen, we'd think about how the season went/how it was over. We were so committed to this tradition that when one year we forgot a speaker, we made out coach drive by a Target so one of my teammates could run in and buy a speaker. After we got home, a senior would make a CD of all the songs we listened to and give them out to each of us on the Bus. I still have a lot of those playlists still on my iTunes account today.

10) Favorite class and/or teacher at NT:

My favorite class at New Trier was either AP Biology with Jim Burnside or Anatomy and Physiology with Wes Molyneux. Not only did I find the courses very interesting (I went on to be a Health and Exercise Science Major in college), but the professors were absolutely incredible. They were not only mentors as teachers, but they also cared about their students and always made themselves a resource for us to utilize. I made really great friends in both those classes as well. I always found myself laughing at one point or another in those classes.

11) Where did you attend college: Wake Forest University

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

Aside from the actual physical act of running, college running is nothing like high school running, especially D1. The distances are longer (well I increased in distance), the training is much harder, and the seasons are much longer. For many runners, Freshman year is a trial run- no pun intended- and most get injured or accomplish very little. It's hard to go from being the best in the state to not even in the top 7 on your team. I also doubled my mileage having run 25-30 miles a week in high school to 65 in college with two additional swim workouts. With this increase in training, however, I saw huge improvements in my performances. I ran the 5k and 10k on the track, and I would run through the two mile mark of those races close to or faster than my two mile PR in high school. I had teammates that I trained with, one teammate in particular, and we never raced each other in practice but always worked together to hit the specific splits. I've never meshed so well with a training partner as I did with this particular teammate and even though she always raced faster than me, we always supported each other and helped push each other.

The coach and athlete relationship also changes from high school to college. I would always tell myself that college athletics is a business. As a scholarship athlete, I'm being paid to run and represent my school. I took this very seriously and made sure I held up my end of the bargain by doing everything I could to be a good leader on the team and compete to the best of my capability. With all that in mind, I felt that my team dynamics in college were stronger than those in high school not because I made better friends necessarily, but because my team was my family. We lived together, worked out together, studied together, got yelled at by our coaches together, and we had successes/failures together. My Senior year especially, as the only senior left on my cross country team and the team captain, I felt this overwhelming urge all the time to

make sure all my teammates needs were met. My team had a coaching change after my freshman year and although the coaches that came in made our team much better, many of the athletes not recruited by them did not accept them with open arms. I tried to help decrease conflict among the team by making myself a support system that my teammates could always fall back on. Since we were essentially in season year round, our social lives were pretty dry. This made it even more important to have close team ties because it is easier to spend time with people who have the same aspirations as you and know that sacrificing one area is worth it to reach your accomplishments.

13) College sports accomplishments:

- ACC Cross Country Championships Individually in 2016 28th place, 2017 35th place, 2018 28th place
- ACC Cross Country Championships Team in 2016 8th place, 2017 5th place, 2018 8th place
- NCAA South East Region All- Regional honors with a 17th place finish in 2018
- NCAA South East Region Team finish in 2016 5th place, 2017, 6th place, 2018 4th place (the highest wake forest team finish since 2005)
- All-ACC Track and Field Championship 2018 5th place in the 10k
- NCAA East Regional Qualifier in the 10k In 2018 with a 17th place finish, qualifier in the 10k and 5k in 2019 with a 17th place finish in the 10k and a 25th place finish in the 5k
- All ACC Academic 2016, 2017, and 2018 for cross country and 2018 for track
- ACC PostGraduate Scholarship Recipient
- Women's Cross Country Captain and Distance Ground Leader in 2017-2019
- 1500m- 4:32, 1600m- 4:54, 3k- 9:40, 5k- 16:26, 10k- 34:14

14) Favorite college sports moments:

My favorite college sports moment was probably after my last race back in May. I had run a 10k on Thursday night and had the 5k on Saturday night. 25 laps of hard effort just destroys your body, so I knew I was going to be rigging in the 5k. But it was my last race, so I was going push through it for 12.5 more laps. I wasn't near my PR at all when I cross the finish line, but I ran pretty well considering. When I walked off the track, all my teammates were there waiting for me, crying and giving my hugs, even my dad. My dad never cries and even he was watery eyed. I was able to catch my breath and then looked up to my coach running towards me. It was very clear she had been crying earlier as well and we hugged. She said to me "you ran as hard as your could and gave it absolutely everything you could in that last 1k. I'm so proud of you." At that last point I lost it and although I have never been so exhausted in my life, I was full on crying. My Sophomore year, my entire track program got an entire new coaching staff and for many of the athletes in my grade, the transition was very rough. I was really close with my coach and worked really hard with her over the past 3 years to assimilate the team to her coaching style and get the team better. It had been a long 3 years with many ups and downs, but I made it to the end and completed 4 years of successful D1 athletics. I could tell my coach was crying at the end of my race not because it was a phenomenal race or performance, but because it was the last one we'd share together. I felt in that moment I had done everything I could for the program and I finally could relax.

15) Area of study: Health and Exercise Science

16) What do you do now?

I will be attending Duke University to receive my Doctor of Physical Therapy Degree

17) If you could go back in time and give yourself advice/wisdom as you are starting Freshman year at New Trier, what would that advice be?

I think I would tell myself to stop playing the comparison game with everyone around you. As a competitive runner, I'm always comparing myself to what times my opponents have run, what they look like, and how consistent they are. This tendency to compare has bleed over a lot into other areas of my life and it makes me insecure sometimes. As I've grown up, I've become more aware of *tendency to compare*, but I've also gained more of an understanding that it's totally fine when people are different and allocating their time towards different things. I sacrificed a lot of my social life for my school, athletics, and my team in college and high school, but that's because those things were important to me and I wouldn't be in the spot I'm at without of my dedication. I would go back and tell myself that if I choose to dedicate myself to those aspects of my life, then I can't be envious or jealous of other people choosing to allocate their time differently. Because at the end of the day if you're happy, why does it matter how you spend your time or what you choose to focus on. You can't live other people's lives for them but you can live yours, so don't feel insecure about the decisions you make if they're what's best for you.

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

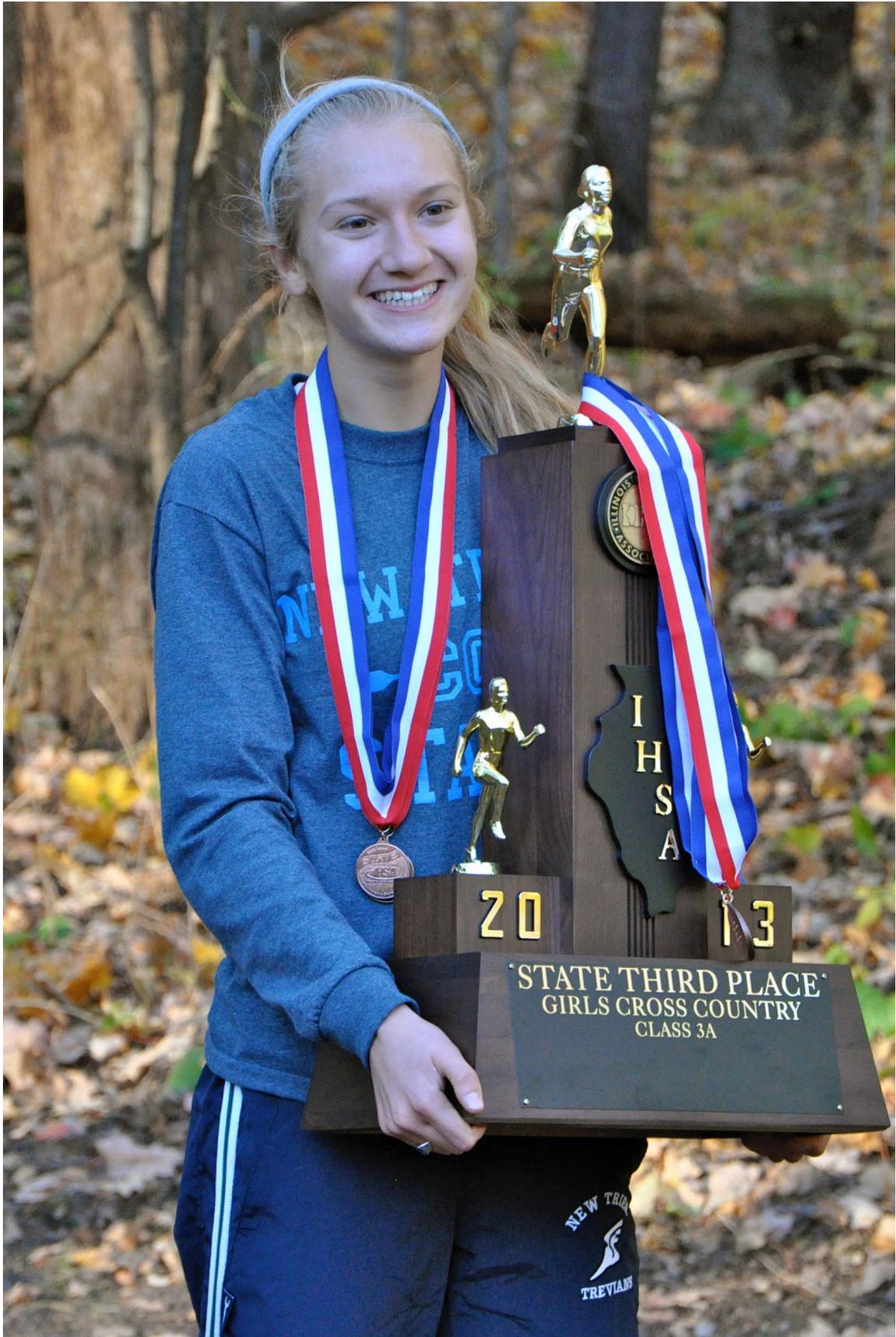
I remember every Friday night before a race just having some alone time and watching a movie or TV before a race I had the next day because I was nervous and wanted to make sure I was well rested. I wish I would have gone to that Friday night football game or went to a couple more of my friends' sports games. I went to a lot of NT women's soccer games because I knew a lot of the players, but I wish I had gone to more basketball, field hockey, lacrosse, or volleyball games. Even in college, I wish I branched out a little more and went to more of my fellow athletes sporting events.

I also wish I learned how to play the drums. I love music and I took piano/singing lessons for a short period. But I think I was so focused on running all the time, I never let myself explore other interests. I saw *Bohemian Rhapsody* and *Rocket Man* recently and I guess they really got to me. I think it is really good to have a wide variety of interests and talents. Who knows, now that I'm RETIRED, maybe I'll learn how to play the drums or

guitar or something.







STATE THIRD PLACE
GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY
CLASS 3A

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NEW TR
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