

TRACK AND FIELD | CAMPBELL

Campbell's Alexis Jones is peaking at the right time as region meets are set to get underway. Jones ran the best high school time in the nation in the 400-meter hurdles, 59.44 seconds, in South Carolina earlier this month. She also ran a personal best of 13.86 seconds in the 100-meter hurdles. / Staff - Carlton D. White

NO FOOLING

Campbell's Alexis Jones has become one of the top high-school hurdlers in the nation

By Carlton D. White / cwhite@mdjonline.com

SMYRNA — Campbell's Alexis Jones was just fooling around.

A former 800-meter runner in Campbell's track and field youth program, as a freshman with the Lady Spartans, Jones asked to try the hurdles after watching her more experienced contemporaries — Erin Hardnett, Jasmine Edgeron and Jazmine Lacy — take on the obstacles during practice.

"I was just playing when I asked the coaches if I could try the hurdles," Jones said. "I saw the older girls going over them, and just wanted to give it a try. It looked like fun."

Jones' exploits over the hurdles that day caught the attention of girls co-coach Terrance Wilson, who immediately recognized her potential.

"Alexis was just trying the hurdles out, but I noticed that she was switching legs as she went over them," Wilson said. "That was it for me. Right then I knew, this girl was going to be a hurdler."

The key, said Wilson, was watching Jones not break her stride.

"She didn't stop her rhythm, and you couldn't tell which leg was her lead leg," he said. "I learned early on in my hurdle career that it's not always about being the fastest over the hurdles, but having the fastest rhythm. You could tell Alexis wasn't going to have a problem with her rhythm."

Jones has blossomed as a hurdler ever since, becoming a two-time 300-meter state champion as a sophomore and a junior, and earning

state runner-up honors as a freshman. She set the school record at 42.12 her sophomore season, and was a 2015 United States Track and Field Junior Olympics All-American after winning the 400 hurdles in the 15-16-year-old age group with a time of 58.86.

The best, however, may be yet to come for the 5-foot-9 Jones, who overcame a mid-low back strain her junior year in winning her state title.

With the Region 2AAAAAAA track and field championships set to take place Wednesday and Saturday at Westlake, Jones is relaxed and confident entering the final weeks of her season. She had her best meet of the year at the Bojangles Track and Field Classic in

SFF JONES R3