

Catch Her If You Can

Track and cross country standout Elle Purrier '17 is rewriting the UNH record books

Tuesday, April 26, 2016



In 2014, she led her team to victory in the America East cross country championship with a 5K first-place finish of 17:19, the same year she won the USA Junior National Championships in the 3000 meter steeplechase. In 2015, she prevailed in both the 1500 and 3000 meter races at the America East outdoor track championships and went on to the NCAA Division I finals; this February, she set a nation-best NCAA time in the mile, breaking the tape in a scorching 4 minutes, 29.71 seconds.



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If you're starting to think

there's nothing Elinor Purrier

'17 can't do, you might be on to something. Last Friday, April 15,

the nutrition major, dean's list regular and indoor/outdoor

Academic All American qualified for the Olympic trials in the

steeplechase with school-record-setting first place finish at

Providence College's Ocean State Invitational.

UNH track and field coach Rob Hoppler describes Purrier as

"unique." A three-year captain of her high school basketball team

(see above: "nothing Elinor Purrier '17 can't do"), "Elle has really

good feet and really good strength," Hoppler explains. At least in

part because of her basketball background, "she's really got an

incredible combination of athleticism and toughness."

Much of that toughness comes from Purrier's background: She

grew up on a dairy farm in hilly far northern Vermont and fit her

high school workouts in with daily chores that included feeding

and helping milk her family's 60 head of cattle and tossing 40-

pound hay bales — chores she still picks up without a hitch when

she returns home to Montgomery in the summers. "She's

someone who knows what hard work is," Hoppler says.

Over March break, Purrier's hard work took her to the NCAA

indoor track championships in Birmingham, Alabama, where she

finished third in the mile. This spring, she's turned her attention to

the steeplechase, an endurance event that combines a run of

almost two miles with 28 hurdles, seven of which drop into a 12-

foot-long water jump. She placed eighth in the world junior

steeplechase championships two summers ago, just months after

she started training for the event using makeshift hay bale hurdles

at home. Now, she has the Olympic trials in Eugene, Oregon, in

her crosshairs for July.

For all her accomplishments and their attendant pressures,

Purrier is remarkably even keeled. She says she tries not to think

too far into the future or place particular expectations on herself. “I like to set my own pace,” she says. “Hearing the sound of footsteps behind me keeps me motivated.” That’s a good thing; at the rate she’s going, the only footsteps she’s going to hear will continue to be behind her.

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Athlete-Scholar



ELLE PURRIER, SECOND FROM LEFT

Athletic prowess, yes, she has it. But Elinor Purrier is no slouch in the classroom. In 2015, she was one of five UNH students to receive the coveted Gilman International Scholarship for study abroad.

ARTICLE

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