



Rolonda Jumbo, Chinle HS - Running beyond prep athletics

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Arizona Track

9/23/10 - Even though Chinle High School junior Rolonda Jumbo has been a runner since the fourth grade, she wanted to play football—but her dad refused to sign the form.

“He wouldn’t sign it, because I was like this little baby girl in a football uniform,” Jumbo said. “He said no, but was willing to sign the cross country form. I guess that, and I just started running because I really liked watching my brother run high school races.”

Jumbo was the 3A girls cross country state champion in 2008 and 2009; she also dominated in the 1600 and 3200 meter run at the 3A track and field state championship this past May after losing her season to a non-running related injury.

It’s hard to believe that Jumbo was once painfully shy.

Perhaps you could say that’s still the case—Jumbo’s coach, Shaun Martin, was concerned that there wouldn’t be enough content for a feature.

“I will be curious to see how she handles this interview,” Martin said. “She’s become a little more extroverted; it used to be ‘yes, no, it was good’, so let’s see what happens.”

Martin has worked with Jumbo since the fourth grade.

“I’ve been fortunate enough to watch her grow and develop as a person,” Martin said. “Her work ethic is unbelievable. It’s pretty much unmatched at the level she’s at. She’s constantly going; if not, she’s thinking about going.”

Jumbo is just thankful that Martin has stayed with the team as long as he has.

“He’s a good coach, one that doesn’t come around too often,” Jumbo said. “Our school will get coaches and they’ll leave. I really look up to him. He helped me become a great runner knowing there’s a mental side to running.”

While there’s no doubt that Jumbo is a successful runner, the 2009 season isn’t what she had hoped for.

“She didn’t have the season she wanted to have last year, her freshman year was awesome,” Martin

said. “It was to a point that it actually hindered her success sophomore year. She ran for the US Junior team as a freshman, so it was an incredible season and just burned her out for six to seven months.”

It appears that her 2010 season is on track for improvement from the last. Most recently, Jumbo won the Four Corners Invitational at Buffalo Park in Flagstaff, completing the race a blazing minute and 20 seconds ahead of Flagstaff High’s Kimmi Allen.

Jumbo also shattered her personal best from freshman year.



“It was a good day, I ran efficiently,” Jumbo said. “It was my best time since freshman year; then it was 18:57, now it’s 18:16.”

But Jumbo’s goals and aspirations go far beyond prep athletics—a repeat win in November would be nice; however, this runner is focused on the bigger picture.

“It would be nice, but that’s not what I’m aiming for this season,” Jumbo said. “My goal is to just do better than I have in the past at the bigger meets like Nike Cross Nationals and Foot Locker. Last year I didn’t do so well, but freshman year I placed fourth at Foot Locker and twelfth at Nike.”

Since the earliest of age, Jumbo has wanted to run in college—it’s something she expects herself to do.

She’s always dreamed of being an Olympian, and highly admires Jenny Barringer, a steeplechaser that attended the University of Colorado.

“She was the top runner at Boulder, and that’s where I’m looking to go,” Jumbo said. “It’s somewhere I’ve wanted to go for a while. It’s definitely in my top five.”

This summer, Jumbo was able to run and be a facilitator for Wings of America.



Wings of America is a non-profit program founded in 1987. Its mission is to enhance the quality of life of American Indian Youth, using running as a catalyst to empower American Indian and Alaska Native youth.

“Wings selects the top six Native American runners in the country, 18 and under to compete at the US cross country meet,” Martin said. “All expenses are paid for the athletes, and it’s fully supported by Nike. Then those kids have the chance to be camp facilitators.”

The facilitators put on camps all summer throughout Native communities.

Wings will provide speakers, clinicians and other assistance to wellness programs, conferences, athletic banquets and fairs. Wings also distributes running shoes to Native youth. This summer, Bo Reed presented at Martin’s camp.

Martin is currently the interim program director. He ran for Wings himself, and kept in close contact with the organizer while in college. The previous program director had to move, so the founder asked Martin to step in.

“Rolonda is pretty much the poster child of Wings right now, being so successful and living such a hard lifestyle,” Martin said. “If you got to know Rolonda you’d be amazed at how she lives. Dirt roads, small house with a big family, no modern conveniences like running water and electricity, it’s like a working farm basically.”

Since Jumbo was a facilitator for Wings, this was a means of forcing her to get out of her shell.

“She’s come a long way as a person,” Martin said. “Being put in front of 100-200 kids a day for two days at a time, she’s grown a lot.”

Jumbo took a lot from of Wings, both as a participant and a facilitator.

“There were some individual little kids that said I was their idol and it felt really good hearing that from them,” Jumbo said. “I also got to talk to kids about how to stay away from alcohol; nutrition, how core and dynamic work helps, and we took them for a few workouts.”

Right now, Jumbo’s focus is on her season and her long-term goals.

“Nothing’s going to hold me back, I’m healthy right now.”