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## **Daniels High Performance breaks national record at Junior Olympics**

**Bryant Roche**

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**I**t wasn't perfect, but James Daniels got the result he wanted for his track club at the **AAU Junior Olympics**.

The Daniels High Performance girls' 17-18 4x100 relay team broke a national record on Friday, then took gold on Saturday in the AAU Junior Olympics at North Carolina A&T's Truist Stadium.

The local track club's "A" team ran a time of 44.22 seconds in the semifinals to beat the previous meet record of 44.48 set in 2023 by Team Quest of Waxahachie, Texas. In the finals, they ran a 44.62 to hold off Track Masterz NC, who ran a 44.77 before the rain came.

"From my vantage point, I thought we ran well, but we didn't execute our handoff as well as we did yesterday (Friday), but their experience and the work we put in in practice allowed us to overcome some handoffs that didn't go as well as they should've been," said Daniels, the club's head coach. "But at the end of the day, we were able to pull it out and come home with the victory. I'm really proud of the young ladies."

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The quartet was comprised of Nilijah Darden of Dudley on the first leg, Joslyn Hamilton of Rolesville on the second leg, **Jalee Brown** of Dudley on the third leg and Dana Wilson of Greensboro Day as anchor.

Darden ran an 11.66 to finish second at the Adidas Track Nationals' 100-meter championship division race. Hamilton was the 2023-24 Girls Gatorade North Carolina Track Player of the Year with three individual state titles, the 100 meters and both hurdles events, and a team title for Rolesville in this year's NCHSAA 4A meet. Brown was the NCHSAA 3A state champion for the 100 and 200 meters, in addition to the 4x100 and 4x200 relays with Darden and others, in **Dudley's 2024 NCHSAA 3A outdoor state championship effort.**

Wilson is the **fastest sprinter in the 100 and 200 meters in Greensboro area history** and had the best times for each of those events statewide this past season. At this year's **NCISAA Division II state championships**, she won the 100 meters in 11.23 seconds and the 200 at the championship division at 23.12 seconds.

All are rising seniors, except for Hamilton, who graduated from Rolesville.

"It means everything to us," Hamilton said. "That is what we have been planning to do. When he brought us together, that was the goal this whole time. He wanted N.C. girls to break the national record, so that is what we did."

Daniels had an accomplished 32-year college coaching career beginning in 1991 that included stops at North Carolina A&T, South Carolina and Winston-Salem State. He has also been a private coach and established his High Performance club in November, making this the first year his club has been featured in the Junior Olympics, which was in Greensboro for the third time.

Daniels said he has trained Brown for about two years, met Wilson her ninth grade year via her Greensboro Day coach James Wilson and has worked with Darden for about the same time. He started training Hamilton, the lone non-local, in December after forming a relationship with her father Josh Hamilton at a hurdles seminar. He described them as a hard-working group both in track and academically with high GPAs.

“It’s been an absolute blessing and I don’t say that in any other way,” Daniels said.

“It’s been a blessing. The young ladies work hard. They’ve earned every accolade that they have accomplished. They have earned every one of them. They were humble, they allowed me to move them around to different positions on the track to run the 4x1. Some of them are only used to running certain legs and so they had to be taught as athletes to just do something different and take them out of their comfort zones and they reacted to it very well.”

Brown and Wilson talked about what it meant taking part in this meet in Greensboro and to accomplish what they were able to do.

“The Junior Olympics being in Greensboro this year was really convenient and made it easier to bring the 4x1 together,” Brown said, “but I’m just really glad that we got to bring home the win and just represent North Carolina and Greensboro well.”

### **Other Greensboro-area performers:**

**Makenna Barnett, Daniels High Performance:** The Grimsley rising senior ran a 13.45 in the girls 17-18 100-meter hurdles to win first place over Kyndall Harrington of The Yard Athletics, who ran a 13.56.

**Le’Ezra Brown, Lights Out Track and Field:** The **Dudley rising senior**, this year’s **Boys Gatorade North Carolina Track Player of the Year**, won the boys 17-18 110-meter hurdles in 13.50. He won the event by .28 seconds. Also a member of the Lights Out boys 17-18 4x100 relay that finished second place with a time of 40.05.

**Elle Dawson, High Point Blaze Track and XC Club:** The Greensboro homeschooler won the girls 15-16 3,000 meters with a personal-best 10:18.57. Finished second in the 1500 at 4:42.83.

**Leila Henderson, Durham Striders:** The Western Guilford rising senior finished third in the girls 17-18 discus throw at 41.52 meters.

**Tianna Spinks, Panthers Elite:** The **Southern Guilford rising senior** won the girls 17-18 400-meter dash in 54.27 seconds. Kiera Davis of Ruff KUTZ Track Team was second in 54.88.

**Johnathan Walrath, Daniels High Performance:** The recent Northern Guilford graduate won the boys 17-18 200-meter race in 21.02 over second-place Jordan Urrutia of Parker Track Club, who ran a 21.13.

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