

Get to know Ridgewood's Camryn Wennersten, girls T&F Week 4 performer of the week



Ridgewood freshman Camryn Wennersten (center) with teammates Cassie Keyes (left), Katherine Muccio (right) and Virginia Morley (top) at the Penn Relays last week. (Photo courtesy of Jacob Brown)

By JJ Conrad | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com

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Ridgewood freshman Camryn Wennersten was making her Penn Relays debut last week and anchored the program's distance medley relay team in a big way to put them among some of Bergen County's all-time DMR teams. Following that performance, Wennersten racked up the most votes in our Week 4 Performer of the Week poll to win this week's top honor ([check out the list of 5 nominees](#)).

Here's her story:

JUST THE FACTS: In her first career Penn Relays appearance -- and first ever trip to the University of Penn in general -- the freshman Wennersten anchored Ridgewood's distance medley relay team, including Cassie Keyes, Katherine Muccio and Virginia Morley, and posted a 1,600-meter split of 4:54.35. [Ridgewood finished in 11:54.22, good for eighth-place in a race that featured eight of the top 12 times in the country this spring](#) and move into No. 2 all-time in Bergen County history. For perspective of how fast the race was, Ridgewood's time would have won a wheel at the Penn Relays last year.

ON YOUR BIG PENN PERFORMANCE: "Well, we were thinking about it this week and just wondering what we can do at Nationals if we make it. We all basically had PRs or tied our PRs so we were all really proud of our efforts. My goal going into the race was closer to 4:50,

but I've been trying to go out slower and, again, I went out a little too fast. But I just feel that at the end I pushed hard and I did it all for my teammates because this was their last year. I'll be running the 16 again in about a week and I'm hoping to get a PR by two seconds - like 4:52. I'm going to push myself and know I've got to go out at a controlled pace and have negative splits."

HOW YOU GOT INTO TRACK: "I first started doing 5Ks for fun in my town and then did the [Memorial Day runs with my uncles and cousins and my mom and dad](#). Later I started running at a club, Racefaster, when I was 10 and actually Jacob Brown coached it, which was cool because he was the coach at Ridgewood High School so I got to see his coaching and the ways he coached the high school team. I also ran for Coach Murt [John Murtaugh], who coaches at Pascack Valley and is a great coach who made me really love running."

FAVORITE TRACK MEMORY (SO FAR): "Well there's a lot, but I would say there was this one track meet when I was 12 or 13 and it was states, I believe. We had states, regionals and nationals so this was the beginning level of the championship season. I had strong competitors in the race and me and this one girl were both doing the 1,500 and I passed her with 300 to go. There's a video of it. In my mind, I don't know, I just defeated her in my mind and ended up finishing 10 seconds ahead of her."

PRE-MEET RITUALS OR SUPERSTITIONS: "I have these recovery boots that I use after every workout, but especially pre-meets, too, to get my legs fresh and ready. And we actually had a pasta dinner tonight with the whole tea,, but I normally make pasta for myself at home if we don't have that. And at night, or like an hour before my race, I do some visualization of the race and what my plan is going into it."

CRAZIEST THING YOU'VE SEEN IN TRACK: "It was recently actually, at Arcardia, when one of our seniors, Victoria Purritano, was in the 4x100 hurdles and she tripped over one of the hurdles, but did a somersault and kept on running and our team got first. Everyone in the crowd was like, 'Ohhh,' but then all started cheering. That was really cool."

PEOPLE KNOW I'M GOOD AT TRACK, BUT THEY DON'T KNOW I'M ALSO GOOD AT: "I'd say since I did gymnastics when I was younger like flips and backflips and things like that. Oh, and me and my friend Olivia Shuttuck have these competitions in pull-ups and I can do 12 now."

COLLEGE PLANS: "I always thought Oregon would be a pretty cool school to go to. Their track is at like the center of everything, it's such a famous track. And, like, [Steve] Prefontaine is a famous runner who ran there a lot. A lot of cool runners have run there. My uncle used to live out there and worked for Nike and always said how beautiful it was."

FAVORITE CLASS: "Math, I would say, because my dad is really good at it and it kind of rubbed off on me."

FAVORITE PERSON IN HISTORY: "Probably Prefontaine, the guy I talked about before. I've watched some of his movies and I had a race in North Carolina and we drove down there and the whole time I was watching his movies and it got me so pumped up for the race."

LATEST BINGE WATCH: "Well, *Survivor* is on tonight [Wednesday] and I watch that every week. I have pretty much since I was young. I just like the competitiveness and just how it's played, how they vote, all the strategies. I like the challenges the most."

IF YOU COULD TRADE PLACES FOR A DAY WITH SOMEONE: "I think I'd go with one of my coaches, either Coach [Pat] Ryan or Coach [Steve] Opremcak just to see what's like on the other side of it when I'm racing. I want to see how much stress they get and see if it's more than I get or not."

And what's your stress level?

"Oh, it's high. Just because I always get so nervous before races. I put that pressure on myself."

DINNER FOR FOUR: "First I'd go with my sister [Peyton, 12], because she's family and I love her. Second, I'd go with my friend and teammate Olivia Shuttuck. She's just really funny and nice and caring. And third, Shalane Flanagan - the marathon runner. She's someone I look up to and it'd be pretty cool if she came."

SPECIAL SHOUTOUTS: "Definitely three of the seniors, Cassie [Keyes], Katherine [Muccio] and Virginia [Morley] because next year, we're not only losing a big chunk of talent, but we're losing the great leadership they bring. It's been so great how they've welcomed all the freshmen and made us feel so comfortable and we've had so much fun. Without them, this season wouldn't be the same."

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