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OLYMPIC
HOPEFUL
JENNA
ROGERS
OF
RUTHERFORD



High Jumps, High Hopes

Rutherford High School alum Jenna Rogers is captain of the track and field team at the University of Nebraska, where she's looking like a potential Olympic star.

Will we see Jenna Rogers on the roster for the 2024 summer Olympics in Paris? That's what this Rutherford native is aiming for after she graduates from college—and while pursuing a master's degree in the next six months. Rogers, a 21-year-old senior, is captain of the track and field team at the University of Nebraska, where she's accumulated a bevy of awards and honors in the women's high jump. She made time for a chat.

What got you into track and field?

I started high jump when I was around 9 years old. I joined track because I wanted to run, but I really wasn't fast, so I found field events were a better fit for me.

At Rutherford High you played volleyball too, right? Did you have to choose one sport over the other for college?

Yes. I realized I was more passionate about track than volleyball, and I loved that it was an individual sport. I like to be responsible for my own success.

Speaking of success, you've won quite a few titles and honors, including being New Jersey state record holder in the high jump.

Which ones are you most proud of?

Definitely being an All-American. That means you finish top eight in your event in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) nationals. I did that three out of four times in college. I worked really hard for that one.

What's a typical day like when school is in session?

I'm a communicative science and disorders major—I want to be a speech pathologist. My classes are from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Then I get lunch, then I have lifting starting at 1 p.m. and right from lifting I go to practice. I'm done around 5 p.m. Then I have dinner and go home and do homework. I end up finding some time later in the day or on weekends to hang



out with my roommates. I'm usually fairly free if I'm not working or hosting a recruit.

How is the lifestyle in Nebraska different from New Jersey?

I hate to say it, but because New Jersey is such a fast pace, we don't connect to people as much as they do here in Nebraska. People care about one another, and the slower pace allows people to be kinder and get to know people better.

But there must be things you miss about the Garden State.

Bagels, for sure. I crave bagels and they don't have them here. I called my dad the other day to send me some! Bagel Supreme in Rutherford is my go-to spot. And Italian food is so much better in New Jersey. Matera's in Rutherford is one of the best.

What do you like to do when you're not training?

I started a program for people with special needs to do track and field—that's at school once a week. I have two cousins on the autism spectrum, so it's been rewarding meeting people with special needs, and I think it'll also help with my career in speech pathology. I also love to sew, which makes me sound like such a grandma [laughs]. I sew clothes—pants, skirts. I took a class in high school and then kind of taught myself.

What's next after graduation? Are you training for the Olympics?

My goal is to go to the 2024 summer Olympics in Paris. I'll find out in July! Last year I placed second at the USA championships and in the top three, but I have to hit an Olympic standard [this year]. I think I'm pretty close, and I think I'll reach that if I jump a little bit higher and continue to place higher. My training is more intense, and I'm more focused on my eating habits and the amount of sleep I'm getting.

It's stressful but it's obtainable.

What are your other goals for 2024?

Once I graduate, I want to get into grad school, hopefully in Nebraska. I'll be done with sports eventually. But I'm definitely coming back to New Jersey [one day]. I travel constantly, and I don't think anything beats New Jersey. The vibes, the people are cooler. I say that people are nicer in Nebraska but less judgmental in New Jersey. And you can make more money on that side of the country! Plus, you have the beach, the city, the mountains.

Anything else we should know about you?

My siblings are also crazy good athletes. My parents are three for three on full rides in college. Our family is packed with good athletes.

—Haley Longman