

Jumpman, Jumpman, Jumpman

She's up to something, woo!

by | **kirsten mann**
sports writer

Only 32 inches separated sophomore Kayla Watkins's seventh place finish in the long jump at the state track meet last year from first place.

Not too bad for a freshman competing against the other mostly 50 upperclassmen.

"States was a great experience," Watkins said. "It was an eye opener because the people who go to states are really good."

"The competition had me feeling very nervous and after seeing other runners warm up, I felt my confidence go down. There were so many people who had me overwhelmed, but that didn't stop me from doing my best."

And states last year wasn't the first time Watkins had faced upperclassmen.

"I usually compete with the upperclassmen, and this is sometimes difficult due to the fact that they are much older than me," Watkins said.

In spite of her age, Watkins is not new to the sport.

"When I was 9 I really enjoyed running so I joined the Myrtle Beach recreational track team and ever since then I have kept up with it," she said. "Then I joined the CFHS track team in 8th grade and it was a great decision."

The long jump, which also requires explosive speed, is Watkins's favorite.

"I like long jump better because it's less likely to get hurt while jumping, but I am totally comfortable with sprints," she said. "I have competed in the 4-by-1 100 relay race and the 200 race."

"My favorite aspect of track is competing because you get to showcase what you can do in front of everyone. Before approaching the long jump I usually take 10 strides and take off 85 feet before the board. The faster you are, the farther you will go."

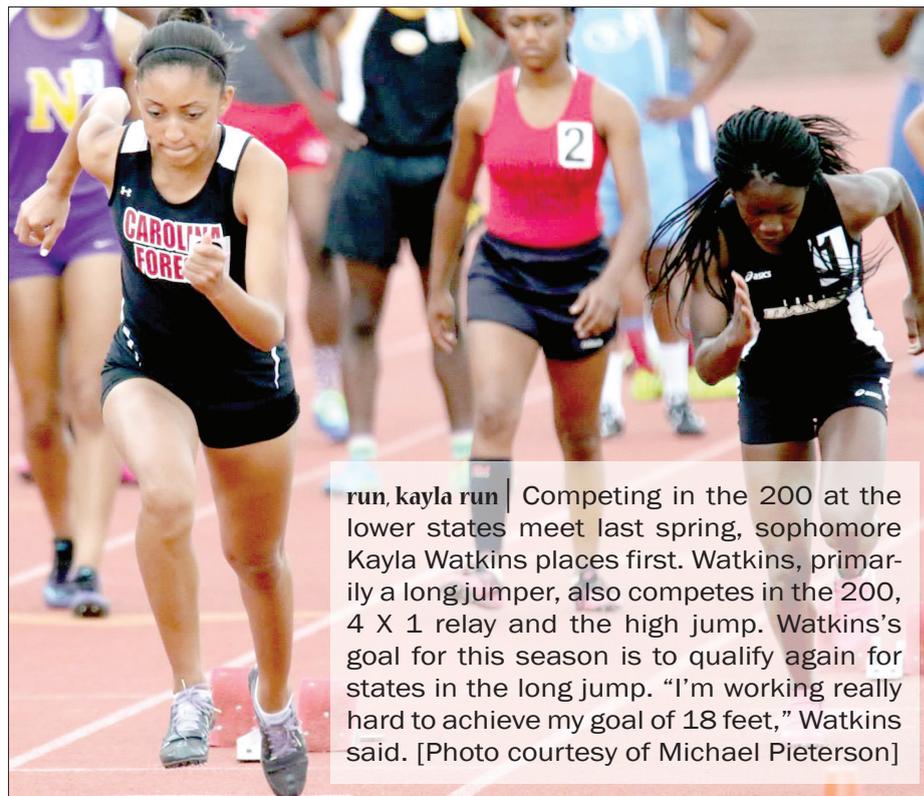
"My weakest area is getting height in the air when I'm doing the long jump, but my state's record was 17 feet 4 inches and my overall best record is 17 feet 6 inches and I work really hard to get that."

And her goal is to propel her 5 foot 8 inch, 125 pound body to an 18 foot jump. And Watkins knows what hard work looks like and what it will take.

"Track is a lot of work so when joining track you have to work hard and put all your dedication into it," she said. "Conditioning for track starts in January, practice starts in February and competing starts in March."

"When I train before a meet, I usually train by speed work, jumping, weight training and plyometric. Plyometric training is quick movements which help you build up power for jumping. In weight training I prepare myself by squats, lunges, sit ups, planks and leg raises."

And that's just during the season.



run, kayla run | Competing in the 200 at the lower states meet last spring, sophomore Kayla Watkins places first. Watkins, primarily a long jumper, also competes in the 200, 4 X 1 relay and the high jump. Watkins's goal for this season is to qualify again for states in the long jump. "I'm working really hard to achieve my goal of 18 feet," Watkins said. [Photo courtesy of Michael Pieteron]

"During the off-season I cheerlead, workout and eat healthy," she said. "Eating healthy is sometimes hard since I'm a teenager and I love junk food. I drink water throughout the day and I eat bananas and cut out all junk food."

Speaking of food, Watkins eats the same thing before track meets.

"Before a track meet I prepare myself by eating a lot of carbs, eating pasta and getting a good night's rest," Watkins said.

She also has a definite routine immediately before a meet.

"I like to listen to rap music. It pumps me up and gets me ready to jump. I usu-

ally listen to anything by Chris Brown," Watkins said.

But that's not the only thing that inspires her. Watkins's long jump coach, Coach Ott, and her high jump coach, Coach Walker, also do.

"Without coaches many players would have no motivation," Watkins said. "My coaches push me to my limits and help me strive to become a better athlete."

"I am very thankful for my coaches who do so much for me to make me the runner I am. They push me every day to become a better runner and hopefully place higher in states this year."

Panthers push for playoff success

by | **austin spraker**
sports writer

After the previous year's drought, the varsity basketball team made it to the playoffs.

The Panthers showed off their skills by winning seven of their first eight games. A young, sophomore-strong roster with only three seniors helped

them get to where they are now.

"Our defense is very quick, and our offense is unselfish," Coach Brian Brunson said.

After a four and one start in the region, the panthers eased into the playoffs even with two straight losses in the middle of the season.

Junior Duane Moss, on

the team since his freshman year, is a key part of their successes.

"We are all on the same page," Moss said. "We trust each other and know what is expected."

Their success has not only been because of their starting five, but also because of their bench as well. Juniors Richmond Collier and Tariq Tim-

mons give the team and extra boost off the bench.

"Win or lose, the season has been one to remember," Moss said.

As of press time, the Panthers are second in the region and won their first home playoff game against Bluffton 69-60. The Panthers traveled to James Island Feb. 20. Results not available at press time.

