

By ED GOTWALS Sports Editor, Chambersburg Public Opinion Imagine this: Kim Spriggs won three gold medals at the 1984 PIAA Track & Field Championships, earning enough points all by herself to give McConnellsburg the Class AA team title, and yet ... she was a little disappointed. How can that be? The bad vibes came from the 300 hurdles. She had blown past everybody else and finished well ahead of the runner-up, but was disqualified for running out of her lane. "I dropped to my knees at the end and cried like a baby," said Spriggs, now Kim Cameron. "I was so tired." But not too tired. She came back to win the 100 hurdles and the long jump, adding to her triple jump title the day before, and scored 30 points to give the Lady Spartans the team title. In her four-year career, Cameron won five PIAA individual events and added another two state championships during the indoor season. In all, she collected 13 state medals. Cameron is being honored Saturday at Penn State when she will be inducted into the Pennsylvania Track & Field Hall of Fame during the state indoor championships. Today, at 2 p.m., McConnellsburg High School will honor her at a school assembly. "This is surprising, but it's a great honor," said Cameron, who now lives in Florissant, Mo., and is a branch manager for National City Bank. "When Mr. (Greg) Hays (her former coach) called and told me, I said, 'Are you serious?'" Cameron is certainly deserving. During her PIAA meets, she set four state records. The race in which she was DQ'd would have been a fifth. She still holds four District 5 championship records. Hays, now the McConnellsburg athletic director, said, "Kim was just a God-gifted athlete. Everything she tried for the first time, she succeeded at; she just needed to refine her skills. She picked up things so quickly." Although she had more rewards in track, Cameron's basketball career was also impressive — she tallied 1,615 points. "I loved playing basketball, but in track I had some individual things I was good at," Cameron said. Plenty good. As a freshman, she placed third in the state in the 300 hurdles. The following year, she took first in the 100 hurdles, second in the 300 and helped the Spartans to a third in the 400 relay. Cameron's junior year was nearly legendary. On that Friday at states, she trailed in the triple jump with one attempt left. But she busted a jump of 37-2.25 — into the wind — to win by more than a foot. On Saturday morning came the fateful 300 race. Here's how fast Cameron ran — the girl who eventually got the gold medal, Debbie Linton of Catasaqua, set a state record with her time of 43.0. Cameron had finished a full second faster. Her time of 42.0 would have put her in the top three times in the country for that year. "At Shippensburg, when you come around the turn after about 200 yards, there are all these lines running together," Cameron said. "I tried to follow my line, but I must have stepped into another lane." Her father, Frank, who lives in Chambersburg, said, "Those lines were confusing. And she was used to running in lane 4, but she was in lane 5 for that race." Instead of letting it get to her, Cameron made the best of the rest of the day. Hays said, "She was resilient. The 300 was around 10:45 in the morning. She came back at about 11:45 and won the 100 in a state record time (14.88). Then that afternoon, she won the long jump (17-8.5)." That put McConnellsburg's point total at 30 and it ended up being two points more than Catasaqua. Cameron said, "Mr. Hays said we were close, but I didn't think much of it because we didn't have any other girls qualify for states. When he told me we'd won the team title, I was like, 'What?'" With ridiculously heavy expectations in her senior season, things didn't go as well. Cameron finally won her 300 hurdles, in 43.13, but she was second in the 100, second in the triple jump and sixth in the long jump. And the team finished third.

However, if you look closely, she had an outstanding meet. Her triple jump of 38-0 was better than her gold-medal effort the year before. Her 14.84 time in the 100 hurdles bettered her first-place time of the year before and she set a state record with a 14.81 in the trials. Hays said, "A girl ran the race of her life to beat Kim in the 100, she won the 300 and she had a better jump in the triple. But by the time she got to the long jump, she had nothing left." "I remember everything very clearly from my junior year," Cameron said. "My senior year was a little tough to deal with. I don't remember much about that, except that I might have had a better time in the 300, but I took it easy on the turn to make sure I stayed in my lane." In her track career, McConnellsburg won four Spartan Invitational championships and four District 5 team titles. Cameron was a National High School All-American in her final three years, including first team as a senior in the 300 hurdles. She went to college at Northeastern Oklahoma A&M, then transferred to Northwest Missouri State. She still holds the record at NW Missouri for the 100 hurdles (14.23) and earned NCAA Division II All-America honors for the 400 hurdles (1:00.2) and the triple jump (39-10.25). Cameron has been married for 20 years to her husband David and they have three children. Her daughter, Siedah, 18, who played tennis and lacrosse in high school, attends Florissant Valley College; David, 17, plays football for Hazellwood Central H.S. (two-time state champions) and Myles, 13, is in eighth grade. He and his 4 X 800 relay team earned a Junior Olympic title two years ago. "I've been very involved in my kids' athletics," Cameron said. With her stellar background, let's hope they were listening.

Ed Gotwals may be reached at 262-4755 and egotwals@publicopinionnews.com.

SIDEBAR

Medals race In her track and field career at McConnellsburg, Kim (Spriggs) Cameron collected 13 medals in state competition: 100 hurdles — 1983 PIAA champion (14.93, state record); 1984 PIAA champion (14.88, state record); 1985 PIAA runner-up (14.84, state record 14.81 in trials) 300 hurdles — 1985 PIAA champion (43.13, second-fastest all-time in AA); 1983 PIAA runner-up (43.31); 1982 PIAA third place (46.22) Triple jump — 1984 PIAA champion (37-2.25); 1984 indoor champion (35-3); 1985 PIAA runner-up (38-0) Long jump — 1984 PIAA champion (17-8.5); 1985 PIAA sixth place (16-5.75) 55 hurdles — 1984 indoor champion (8.44, state record) 4 X 100 relay — 1983 PIAA third place (50.20)