

Mans trading Alton red and black for Illinois orange and blue

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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ALTON – Alton's Katie Mans has developed into one of the St. Louis area's top high jumpers over the past four years.

Mans' dedication and work ethic have paid off for her in many ways for both her and the Redbird girls track team; she announced where she will be jumping for after she graduates from AHS next month in an assembly at the Alton High auditorium Monday morning.

“This fall, I am going to be competing at the (Big Ten's) University of Illinois,” Mans said to the delight of the assembly as she revealed a T-shirt with the U of I athletic logo on it. The other finalists for Mans included the Missouri Valley Conference's Illinois State and the Southeastern Conference's University of Mississippi.

“I'm excited” about the prospect of being a member of the Fighting Illini's women's track team beginning this fall, Mans said. “I think the coaches and teammates and I all have the same vision of what I want to do in the future and also because of my major of academics there just made it easier to decide.”

Mans plans on majoring in molecular and cellular biology in Champaign-Urbana; she got involved with track because of an interest in the sport in general. “I've always been athletic and doing different sports,” Mans, the daughter of Brian and Lola Mans, said.

“When I decided to try out for track, I don't think it was a surprise to anyone; it was something I wanted to do.

“But when I wanted to do the high jump, that was a shocker; I had been a distance runner and a runner and I went straight into the high jump – that was different.”

As always, the goal for Mans is to get back to the IHSA Class 3A state track meet at Eastern Illinois University in Charleston, located about an hour south of what's called the Chambana area on I-57 in east-central Illinois. “That should be exciting too,” Mans said of the short distance between Charleston and Champaign-Urbana.

“It's amazing,” said Redbird coach Jaida Moore of Mans' heading to Illinois. “Just seeing someone I first started coaching with and sending them off to college is amazing; I feel like a parent sending my first kid off to college. I know there's many more to come, but this is special because it's my first one.

“This is the best part of coaching, seeing the kids do better and go further; I can see her competing in the Olympics; she has the potential and the confidence in herself to be the best that she can be. She's a very competitive athlete and seeing her get the opportunity to be able to pick from a bunch of well-rounded schools is amazing.”

“I've known Katie since she was in sixth grade,” said the previous Redbird girls track coach Terry Mitchell. “I've watched her progress and grow and she's quite an athlete and quite a person. She's all first-class and is a true competitor in every sense of the word; she's not going to quit until the end.

“She's not going to back down; she'll compete in whatever she's in – whatever she's doing, she's a competitor and give it what she's got. I can see some great potential there that hopefully, she'll do well at the state finals and at the U of I.”

Mans is thinking about being a member of the U.S. Olympic team – if not Tokyo in 2020, certainly Paris in 2024 and Los Angeles in 2028, but following her graduation from U of I, Mans hopes to attend medical school. As for memories she'll be taking from her time at AHS, “just the experience, I think, and the teammates and coaching style I grew up with,” Mans said. “Alton really helped me get to the next spot forward in my life; I couldn't be more blessed than to go to Alton High School.”