

Freshman Runner Avari Combes Is Tom Lane State Farm Female Athlete Of Month For Civic Memorial High School

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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BETHALTO - Freshman runner Avari Combes enjoyed a successful first season for the girls cross country team at Civic Memorial High School, being one of four Eagles' runners to qualify for the IHSA Class 2A sectional, coming in at 20:38.55 in the Jacksonville regional meet, then having a time of 21:48.96 at the Olney Richland County sectional meet.

For her accomplishments on the cross country courses in her freshman season, Combes has been named as a school's Riverbender.com female Athlete of the Month for December, 2020.

Combes, who runs for head coach Jake Peal, enjoyed success in eighth grade at Trimpe Middle School in Bethalto, then worked her way up the lineup in her freshman year for the Eagles.

"The biggest thing that led to this award was winning sectionals as an eighth-grader, and competing at state," Combes said. "Also, the fact that I ran on a very strong middle school cross country team. Another major factor was that I ran varsity as a freshman, where in the first meet, I was the seventh runner, and worked my way up to become CM's second top runner as a freshman."

Combes thanked her parents, family, coaches and teammates for all of the success she enjoyed in her first year with CM.

"I would like to thank my mom, Shanna Combes, dad, Scott Combes, and my grandparents for always pushing me to work hard and give it my all," Combes said. "When I would want to give up, they gave me the encouragement I needed to get through each race. I would also like to give a shout out to my sisters for supporting me and being my biggest cheerleaders. In addition, I would also like to thank coach Peal for making me something in myself later in the season that I didn't see early on. His encouragement and drive to make me a stronger runner helped push me to do my best. Finally, I would like to thank my teammates for pushing me to work hard and always cheering me on when I wanted to quit."

Combes first took up running in seventh grade, and enjoys the close-knit atmosphere and friendship among her teammates.

"I have been running cross country for three years," Combes said. "I started when Trimpe Middle School got a cross country team my seventh-grade year. Probably the thing I like most about cross country is the closeness of our team. We are such a family, and cheer each other on to always finish strong."

The lessons learned from being involved in sports haven't been lost on Combes.

"Sports have taught me to be disciplined, have good time management skills, and be a leader on and off the course, field or court," Combes said.

Combes is also a point guard on the Eagles' basketball team, where she's hoping to play the 2020-21 season that has been delayed, and also is a midfielder on the soccer team.

She also made the high honor roll in her first quarter in school with straight-As, and is currently on track to accomplish that again in the second quarter.

As far as college goes, she doesn't see herself running after high school, but her plans could change in the future. She hasn't yet decided on where she'll go to college, but currently, her number one choice is Mississippi State University in Starkville, Miss., where she hasn't yet decided on a major. She's interested in diverse majors from dermatology to becoming a member of the Behavioral Analyst Unit of the FBI.

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