

**RIKA
YAHASHIRI**
SWIMMING

Around the time when Michael Phelps won four gold and two silver medals at the 2012 Summer Olympics in London, another swimming great was just getting started.

Rika Yahashiri began her fruitful career at the ripe age of eight. She originally began at the Mercer Aquatic Center swimming competitively for the Iowa City Eels, but after a season switched over to welcoming tides of the Campus Recreation and Wellness Center to swim for IFLY.

Since then, Yahashiri has spent most days of her year breathing chlorine. Yahashiri's mentality makes it possible for her to maintain this lifestyle.

"In order to be successful at swimming you have to bring a good attitude to the pool. You also have to commit to a lot of practices a week with dryland (workout outside the pool) and the weight room."

Although Yahashiri says that there are many times when she wishes that she would have more time to spend with her friends outside of school, the results of her labor make her commitment worthwhile.

"When you're at a meet and beat your goal time or PR, that's the best feeling."

In Yahashiri's first high school swimming season, she has already made her mark. She is a part of the team's best relays and consistently puts up the team's top three times in each individual event. Not only does Yahashiri excel in the pool, but in the classroom and on the stage as well.

"Before I graduate [I want] to try to have a 4.0 GPA while going to state swim every year I'm at City. I want to make All-State band and SEIBA jazz band in trumpet."

**JANIE
PERRILL**
CROSS-COUNTRY

Janie Perrill's experience learning to love cross-country was gradual. She has grown up doing road races and trail runs and feels she has been running all of her life, but it wasn't until seventh grade when she started running on a team that she realized the passion she had for the sport.

As a freshman on the Women's Cross Country team this season, Perrill has proven her ability to run with girls two, and even three, years her senior.

"As a freshman that's something that all the girls and coaches have communicated to me, that I am capable of running with the varsity pack. I hear the words "you've earned it" all the time and that's really uplifting and encouraging when I may be a little scared and skeptical of what I can accomplish."

Beginning the season placing in the top 15 in several freshman/sophomore meets, Perrill then elevated to running extended varsity towards the end of the season. Perrill finished her season as an alternate for the State meet.

"At the beginning of the cross country season I wanted to run a varsity race and to help get our team to state - both of those goals have been achieved."

Although Perrill acknowledges that "cross country is an individual sport that requires a lot of mental and physical toughness", she also knows that having a team makes the experience more enjoyable. After all, the support of her teammates is what drew her to the sport initially.

"You're bettering yourself but you're also bettering your team by pushing them to be the best they can be, I love knowing that when I'm not feeling my best there is someone else that's feeling the same way, but they are still giving it their all."

Perrill may just be at the beginning of her City High running career, but she doesn't plan on reserving her talents for her upperclassmen years.

"There's no time but the present to push your limits and test your abilities."

**FRESHMEN
ATHLETES TO
WATCH**

The Class of 2021 offers an abundance of athletic promise, including these four athletes.

By Addy Smith

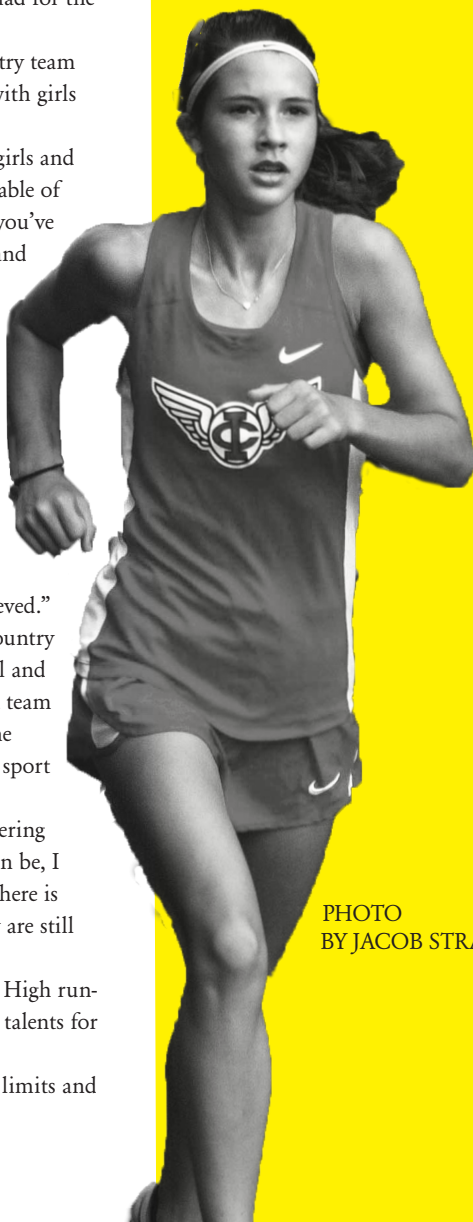


PHOTO BY EGAN SMITH

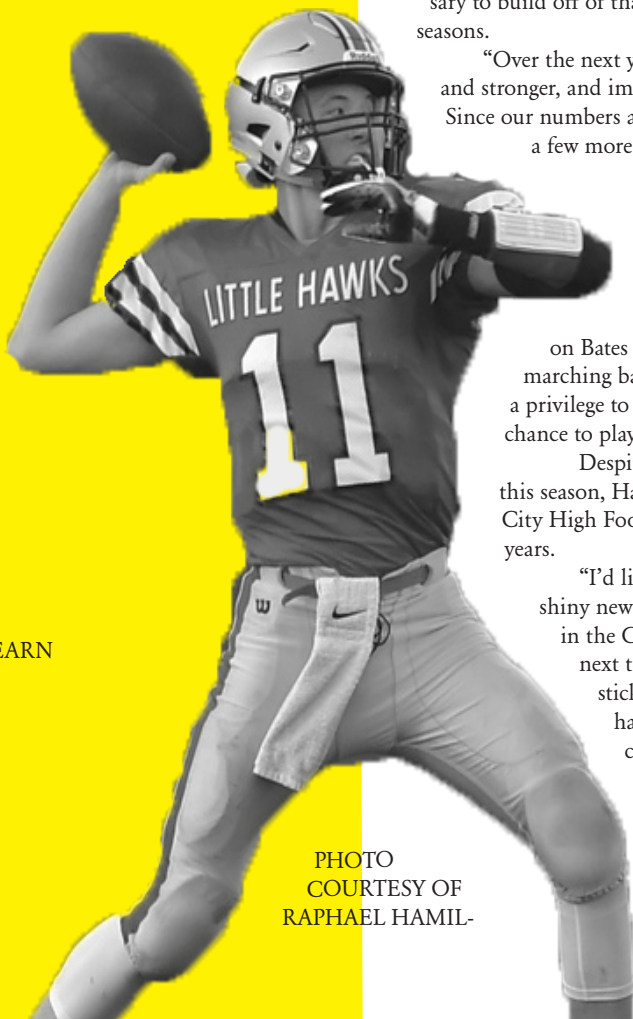


PHOTO BY JACOB STRATHEARN

PHOTO COURTESY OF RAPHAEL HAMILTON

**BLESSINGS
PONGO**
TRACK & FIELD

Deemed the "fastest kid at Kirkwood Elementary School" by his teachers and peers, Blessings Pongo has been known all his life for his speed. Pongo hopes to contribute that speed to the City High program this spring.

Although he doesn't run in the off season, Pongo has thought about joining a local track club to develop his speed and become stronger for the school season.

Despite the fact that speed is typically thought of as something you're either born with or you're not, competitors like Pongo understand that what makes a good runner extends beyond natural ability.

"Running the right way and doing what my coaches tell me based on how I should run the race or relay really helps me a lot."

Pongo will join sprinters like Zach Jones '18 and Max DePrenger '19 on the track in a few months, and Pongo hopes to be right up with them. He has his sights set on accomplish big things during his time here at City.

"Before I graduate is just to be remembered as one of the best athletes to do this sport and also my other goal is to at least break one or more school long time track record."

**RAPHAEL
HAMILTON**
FOOTBALL

Most third graders are just learning to tell time and experimenting with chapter books. Raphael Hamilton was learning how to play football at the same time.

Starting his career off with the Iowa City East (ICE) football league in 3rd grade, he experimented with being lineman, fullback, and linebacker before moving to quarterback in 7th grade. This year, Hamilton played starting quarterback on the combined freshman-sophomore squad.

"I've been learning a lot from the older guys. My best decisions this year were to hand off the ball to Tonka Hickman who had something like 25 rushing touchdowns behind great blocking from our line."

Hamilton played City High baseball over the summer and is looking forward to basketball and track later this year. One of his favorite parts about sports, and football in general, is the team environment.

"We've been through a lot as a team, and it's great to pick each other up after a tough game, and share each other's successes. It's not possible to be successful as an individual in football unless everyone on the team buys in and does his job. We started to come together as a team this year and to see a little bit of success."

Hamilton is willing to put in the work necessary to build off of that glimpse of success for future seasons.

"Over the next year, I'd like to get bigger, faster, and stronger, and improve my decision making. Since our numbers are down, I'd also like to recruit a few more guys to join us next year."

A regular attendee of City High football games since he was four years old, Hamilton has bled red and white since a young age.

"It's a special atmosphere on Bates Field under the lights with the marching band and all the fans, and it's a privilege to represent City High and get a chance to play there."

Despite the varsity team's 2-7 record this season, Hamilton has high hopes for the City High Football program in the upcoming years.

"I'd like to dirty up Liberty High's shiny new uniforms and admire the Boot in the City High trophy case for the next three years. I think that if we stick together as a team and work hard that we have a chance to be competing for State Championships."