

EAST ORANGE RECORD - ORANGE TRANSCRIPT

Long makes up for late career start

Senior, a first-year sprinter at Orange High, excels in Meet of Champions

By Joe Ragozzino
Sports Editor

Orange High School senior De'Andre Long decided to run track for the first time this year.

After what he accomplished this spring, one cannot help but wonder how good he could have been had he taken up the sport earlier in his high school career.

Long capped a great season June 9 with a sixth-place finish in the 200-meter dash during the NJSIAA Meet of Champions in Old Bridge. He was clocked in 21.75 seconds.

"It was exciting and exhilarating," said Long. "It was a very good feeling."

"It was great," said second-year head coach Akil Boucaud of Long's performance. "He worked hard all

season long. He did an excellent job in his first year and to cap his career."

After being a letter-winner in football as a receiver and defensive back in the fall, Long joined the indoor track-and-field team during the winter. He stuck with track this spring and turned up his efforts.

During the Super Essex Conference's Colonial Division Championships in Newark on May 14, Long won three events: 100 meters in 11.43 seconds; 200 meters in 22.88; and 400 meters in 50.70. Long also helped the 4x400-meter relay team to a first-place finish in 3:33.97. The other members of the relay were senior James Howell and juniors Jeff Noel and Shawn Robinson.

A week later, Long won the 200

meters in 21.92 and took second in the 100 in 11.20 during the Essex County Championships in Montclair.

At the state level, during the NJSIAA North Jersey Section 2, Group 2 meet May 27-28, Long took second in the 400 in 49.12 and third in both the 100 in 11.08 and the 200 in 22.59. Long then took fifth in the 200 in 22.20 during the state Group 2 meet on June 3-4. Both meets were in South Plainfield.

Understandably, Long was quite surprised at how well he performed in his first year.

"I never knew what was going to happen," said Long. "I just gave it my all."

Boucaud knew Long had tremendous potential and took

great joy in coaching him.

"He had raw, athletic ability," said Boucaud, a 2001 Orange High graduate who was an assistant coach for the Tornados track team for one year before taking over the helm. "Just teaching him the techniques of running and his hard work, to get better at track, made him a better runner. He really didn't know he was that fast."

Long credited Boucaud for helping him learn to run track.

"He took me step by step," said Long. "He showed me the ropes and the form to better myself, how to run races without going too fast or going too slow."

Boucaud also cited junior Dillon Smart for a fine season in throwing the discus. Smart was second in the discus at the conference meet.