

Samantha Hicks Named USATF-New England Athlete of the Month for December



Photo: Michelle Poublon

BOSTON – **Samantha Hicks**, age 16, a sophomore at Laconia (NH) High School, has been named USA Track & Field – New England’s Athlete of the Month for December 2010. On December 11, at the USATF Junior Olympic Cross Country Championships in Hoover, Alabama, Hicks won the national title in the Intermediate Girl’s race (age 15-16). Running for the Gate City Striders of Nashua, NH, Samantha won the 5 km race in 18:40. This was even faster than the winning time of 19:02 for the 17-18 year old Young Women’s race.

Going into the Junior Olympic Championships, Samantha was hoping to place in the top ten. She noted that the course was pretty flat – similar to the cross country courses she races on in New Hampshire. From the start of the race, she was in the lead pack, and during the second mile she took the lead. She said that she “felt good, felt strong” and pushed the pace, even as she worried about some of her competitors. She pulled away during the third mile, but with 200-300 meters left, she was aware that two runners “were starting to come back

at me.” She maintained well through the finish, winning by 5 seconds. Afterward, she felt surprised and happy – saying that she had not expected to win a national championship.

Hicks has a personal best of 5:06.10 in the 1600 meters, a mark she set as a freshman during the 2010 outdoor season. Her distance and cross country coach at Laconia is **Andy Marshall**.

For the current indoor season, under coach **Chris Beyer**, Samantha has lowered her training volume and focused on shorter distances - from 300 to 1000 meters. She sees this as a break from the heavy mileage of the cross country season and also a chance to develop her speed.

The mile is her favorite race and for the 2011 outdoor season, she has set a goal of running under 5 minutes. Beyond that, she has not set specific athletic goals for the future. She does want to run in college and with two and a half years of high school competition left, Samantha Hicks will have a lot to enjoy and much to accomplish before then.