

# FOUNTAIN OF TRUTH

## Senior proves she's the real deal, springs Columbus to success

BY EBENEZER SAMUEL

**P**LASTERED TO Yvonne Torrente's classroom door at Columbus HS is a newspaper article about Whitney Fountain, the star of the Explorers track team. It's been there for six months, leading many students to inquire about Fountain.

"When the kids come around my classroom, they're all like, 'Who's that?'" Torrente says. "It's a great way to get kids into track. And when we have our first (team) meeting of the year, I tell the kids that she's their teammate. They're all like 'Wow.'"

"But they don't really get how good she is until practice," Torrente adds. "Then they're like, 'Holy (cow)! She's so fast!'"

**Whitney Fountain propels U.S. 4x400-meter relay team to third place at invitational meet in Jamaica during indoor season, then powers Columbus HS to surprising second-place finish during PSAL outdoor championships in June.**

Photo by Bryan Pace



Try as Torrente might, she can't do her standout sprinter justice. Fountain, who attends Pelham Prep at Columbus HS, spent much of 2009 seemingly outrunning a growing mountain of press clippings. The Daily News Bronx Sports Person of the Year began 2009 as one of the nation's top sprinters, and she more than fulfilled that promise while assuming a new role as Columbus' team leader.

"You can't even say she had an incredible season," says Don Potash, Fountain's personal coach. "She was just beyond belief."

Everyone expected Fountain to pace the city in the 300-meter dash, but she set the bar for the nation, clocking the fastest time in the country (38.22) at Bronx borough championships in early February.

Two weeks later, she led a 4x400-meter relay contingent to Kingston, Jamaica, to battle top competition in the prestigious Gibson Relays. With Fountain running leadoff, the U.S. team finished third.

Fountain's decision to go to Jamaica wasn't universally celebrated. The meet took place on the same day as

the PSAL indoor championships, forcing Fountain to skip the meet.

Some city track coaches labeled her selfish, but Torrente backed her sprinter's decision.

"If I had an opportunity like that, I would go, too," the coach said at the time. "I know she's a team player."

Fountain rewarded her coach's support during outdoor season, again eclipsing expectations by leading the Explorers — who'd qualified just

three athletes — to second place in the city title meet.

Fountain won the 200-meter dash in a PSAL-record 23.44 seconds; captured the 400 hurdles crown in a league-best 1:01.33, and claimed the long jump title.

It wasn't merely Fountain's victories that propelled the team; Torrente says her steadiness seemed to buoy her younger teammates.

"It was her confidence," Torrente says. "She showed them, 'This is how a champion does it.'"

Fountain hopes to show her teammates — and the city — more. If 2009 was the best year of her career, she promises it's going to be an even better 2010, on the track and off of it. She no longer has to think about college; she verbally committed to Clemson University earlier this month. She also says she'll be a better team leader this year, thanks to a semester of leadership classes at Pelham Prep.

"I'm going to be twice as good," Fountain says. "I'm going to raise my teammates to another level."

## PERSON OF THE YEAR

## TOP NEWSMAKERS OF 2009

### THE MOUNT ST. MICHAEL FOOTBALL TEAM

There was little ballyhoo surrounding the Mountaineers when the season began; they featured a young quarterback and just a handful of experienced players. It was no surprise, then, when the team got off to a lackluster 1-5 start and suffered blowout losses to CHSFL powers St. Anthony's and St. Joseph-by-the-Sea.



Just one day before the start of 'AA' playoffs in November, the team even worse: junior tailback Kevin Kibert died from carbon monoxide poisoning. Somehow, coach Martin (r.) and Mount survived all the trials and morphed into a championship team. Mountaineers defeated Xavier St. Francis Prep, then upended the Cardinal Hayes team, 28-22, to win the CHSFL 'AA' crown.

### RYAN FEDAK



As a junior, Fedak (l.) led the team. As the hardworking right-handed pitcher, he wound up in the center of a record-setting season. Fedak led the team to a record-setting 17 wins.

first CHSAA 'A' Intersectional crown in 17 years, saving both teams from a repeat loss against Stepinac in the double elimination finals on June 14. Because the Rams had fallen to Stepinac in an earlier game, a loss would have given them the title. But Fedak calmly pitched scoreless innings to hand Stepinac their first loss of the postseason. He shutout two shutout innings in the second round to seal the title for the Rams.

### JOHNNY MATHIS

Kennedy's boys basketball program had fallen behind PSAL powers Lincoln and Boys & Girls in recent years, and the Knights seemed to trail in the Academy in the borough. But JFK's 22nd-year coach, helped reinvigorate the program to prominence. He reached a personal milestone, recording his first career victory in February, but it was hardly the lone highlight of his season.

The Knights broke Wings' three-year reign as Bronx borough champions in February. In March, Mathis led the PSAL 'AA' title game, marking the first time in three seasons that Kennedy advanced past the quarterfinals. The Knights finished the year with a record, and they're off to a...

