

Florence's Gabrielle Thomas finishes 6th in 200 at Olympic Track Trials

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EUGENE, Oreg. — At this time last year, Williston Northampton graduate Gabrielle Thomas didn't even know if she was going to continue running track in college. Now, she is a student-athlete at Harvard and has competed in not only the NCAA championships, but in the U.S. Olympic Track and Field Trials.

After wrapping up her freshman year in college, Thomas finished sixth in the 200-meter final at the Olympic trials Sunday, running 22.72 seconds.

Her final was stacked with a lot of great talent, including Allyson Felix, who had already qualified for Rio with her win in the 400.

Thomas remembered the first time that she saw Felix run during the 2012 London Olympics. Thomas recalled talking to her mom on the phone while watching Felix run with her "long legs."

"I was like, 'Wow, she's amazing,' and that was before I really even took track seriously. And now that I am, it's just so cool," Thomas said. "I love Allyson Felix so much. The fact that I got to run with her was like the best day of my life."

Thomas said that her performance in the 200 final was "pretty average." Although she didn't compete as well as she might have hoped, she hopes to improve on her focus as she continues to compete in high-caliber meets.

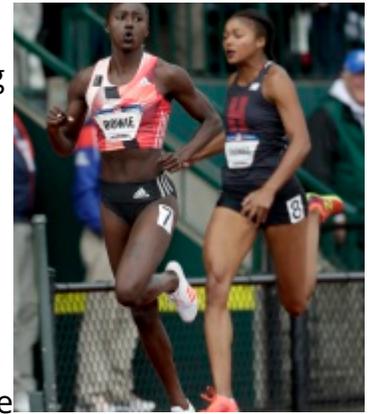
"Mentally, just focusing. More what I'm doing and not, you know, what's going on around me," Thomas said. "I think that's the biggest thing, and I think I would have had a better race, personally, if I would have done that."

Going into the final, Thomas was telling herself exactly that, not to focus on the lanes around her, but just to focus on her race and see what happens.

She was in lane eight with trials 100 bronze medalist Tori Bowie on her inside. Bowie also had the fastest qualifying time of 22.27 going into the 200 final.

“Running alongside her on the curve—she comes out really fast, so that was kind of scary,” Thomas said.

Before the 200 rounds began, Thomas had competed in the first round of the 100 dash on Day 2 of the trials. She ran 11.35 seconds but was unable to qualify for the semifinal. She had to wait six more days until the first round of the 200 on Day 8.



Although Thomas didn't make it past the first round of the 100, she is glad that she had the opportunity to run it.

“Just to get the nervous jitters kind of out of my system,” Thomas said. “You know, being in a huge meet like this, it kind of messes my mind up a little bit just being so young, but I'm really glad I did it. I think that it was great preparation for the 200, as well as nationals was also really good preparation.”

At just 19 years old, Thomas joins a significant group of young athletes that competed well at the trials. Sydney McLaughlin, 16, placed third in the 400-meter hurdles; Vashti Cunningham, 18, placed second in the high jump; Noah Lyles, 18, took fourth in the 200 and Michael Norman, 18, took fifth in the 200.

“It's really cool we're seeing this new generation of runners come in,” Thomas said. “You know, working really hard and replacing the older generation of Olympians and legends.”

The Olympic trials are the last race for Thomas until next season.

“I don't know what's going to come next with track and field, I know that my expectations for myself are a lot higher,” Thomas said. “I think that my appreciation for the sport and love for the sport has increased dramatically, so I'm excited to see what's coming.”
