

Kerrigan Clark didn't have a final destination in mind, but she had a goal: to compete in track and field in college.

That's why the West Lowndes High School senior asked friends to record her performances in the 100 and 200 meters and the 4x100 and 4x200 relays. After she received the videos, Clark asked West Lowndes High track and field coach Michael Thorn to send the clips to college coaches who needed a sprinter.

It turns out Clark and Thorn didn't have to look far to find one.

On Monday, Clark finalized a courtship that started only a month ago when she signed a scholarship to compete in track and field at Stillman College, a private, historically Black Presbyterian school in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

"It definitely was bittersweet going into my senior year," said Clark, who won the 100 in the Class 1A meet last year with a time of 13.18 seconds. "It didn't seem real. Now I am moving on to the collegiate level and I am still processing it."

Clark credits the extra training she did after basketball season for helping her realize her goal. She said she "didn't do half of the stuff" she did this year during her junior year. The training included going to the gym, working out before and after practice and running in the morning before school. Clark said she would sprint down to the stop sign on the road in front of her house and that she also went to the Sportsplex in Starkville to polish her technique. Clark said the distance at her house was about 60 meters.

"I feel like I accomplished my goals this season, although my main goal was to win state this year," said Clark, who visited Stillman College for the first time a few weeks ago. "I fell back a little bit, but overall I feel

like I accomplished my goal to sign with a school to compete in track and field.”

Clark, who also was a member of the West Lowndes High volleyball and girls basketball teams, finished sixth in the 100 and 200 (13.18, 29.02 seconds) at the Mississippi High School Activities Association (MHSAA) Class 1A State Meet on May 7 at the Woody Barnett Track and Field Complex at Pearl High. She advanced to the state meet thanks to a second-place finish in the 100 (13.44) and a first-place finish in the 200 (personal-best time of 27.53), which she called the highlight of her season, at the Class 1A North State Meet on April 27 at Center Hill High in Olive Branch. Clark also was a member of the 4x200 relay team that finished seventh (2 minutes, 3.14 seconds) and the 4x100 team that placed eighth (season-best 57.33).

“KK is a leader on and off the field,” Thorn said. “She is a hard worker who will continue to have success in college and throughout life due to her work ethic.”

Clark finished second in the 100 and 200 (13.29, 28.39) and was part of the 4x100 and 4x200 teams that finished fourth (58.78, 2:03.98) at the Class 1A-2 Super Regional on April 19 at Center Hill High. She won the 100 (personal-best 12.77), finished second in the 200 (28.66) and was a part of the 4x100 and 4x200 teams that finished second (57.78, season-best 2:03) at the Class 1A, Region 4 meet on April 11 at Tishomingo County High.

Clark will study Elementary Education at Stillman College and hopes to become a kindergarten teacher. She said she plans to compete in the 100 and 200 and in the sprint relays in college. Clark acknowledges there will be an adjustment period, but she will take things slowly her freshman year and is ready to work in the offseason so she is prepared

for the transition. If things go well, Clark said she may consider playing volleyball or basketball at Stillman, too.