

## **Alli Baker, 800m 2:08.76, May 18 2019, State Championships, State Record**

No list of amazing achievements for PV Track and Field would be complete without mention of Alli's State Championship/State Record 800 at the 2019 State Championships. In fact, this is arguably the greatest feat ever accomplished in the history of all PV athletics.

Through the season, Alli had continued to show great promise in the 800. Undoubtedly her favorite event, Ali attacks the 800 like a beast on her prey. Coming into the Region Championships, Alli had earned the right to be called the favorite for the title, but a very strong run by Jasie York of Cedar as she narrowly defeated Alli set up the possibility for an epic match up at State.

Going into the race, Alli and I (Coach Holt) had talked about her best strategy to go for the win. There was no doubt that Jasie was going to try and use her 400 speed to establish a strong move at some point in the race and take over the lead. So we discussed keeping the inside track and holding her off no matter how hard the effort had to be - stay half a stride in front of her and keep her on your right shoulder.

At the blast of the gun, Alli and Jasie exploded off the line to gain the best position. It very well could have been the fastest first 200 of an 800 ever run on Utah soil (and I mean collegiately/professionally as well). Determined to hold Jasie off, Alli kept her legs churning and controlled the lead at 200. Knowing very well, that her competitor was going to make at least one more strong move to the front, Alli kept driving. Through the first lap, Alli had opened up a slight lead. The key to a fast 800, however, is the first 100 of the 2nd lap. As I yelled for her to keep pushing on the corner, Alli's determination was burned on her face. By the 500, it was evident that Alli was not slowing in any way and that this was going to be a very special race. By the 600, Alli had opened a commanding lead and her competitors were broken behind her. Now the only question was, "How fast is she going to run?"

In my mind, I thought a low 2:10 was possible. What an amazing time that would be... One of the best in state history. As she exited the final turn, however, a whole new possibility opened up. In a strange turn of events, the crowd seemed (to me at least) to be shockingly quite as they sat stunned at the race they were witnessing. It truly was a work of art to see someone run so fast and calculated at the same time. Alli was leaving no doubt that she was the very best athlete not only on the track in that race, but the best athlete that most everyone that had the privilege to watch this race had ever witnessed. The announcer suddenly broke the silence as Alli drove down the homestretch by announcing that this could be a state record.

As she broke the tape, there was no doubt it was a 4A, but would it be the all-time state record. A 2:08.76 flashed on the scoreboard. Just .3 off the all-time record and the 3rd fastest time in Utah history (beaten only by athletes who became NCAA champions)! Alli worked her wobbly legs over to the fence and fell exhaustedly into a hug. It was truly an inspiring performance where all the hard work and determination of years had come together for something great.