

I stood looking at a poster that read 'Rio 2016'. I could feel my heart beating in my chest and adrenaline pumping through my veins just at the thought. I was going to be one of the youngest sprinters in the Olympics this year but I was determined to show people that I was a force to be reckoned with.

I was only 17 but in the last year I'd broken the national high school women's 100m record of 10.98 seconds, setting the new record at 10.89. I knew my chances of winning a medal in the games were slim as I would be running against the fastest, most experienced athletes in the world. I hadn't even finished high school yet and now that I'd been signed by Nike on a 10 year contract, I wouldn't be allowed to run with my high school team or run in college. It was a big step up but I was determined to succeed.

"Hayley, hurry up," I heard my coach calling for me.

I grabbed my spike bag and hurried out of the changing rooms. I trained six days a week, two days in the gym, Sunday being my only day off. My preferred event was the 100m but in Rio I'd also be competing in 200m and the 4x100m relay. Rio was now less than two months away and I knew I was ready.

Coach Carter had been my coach since I was eleven years old. I couldn't have asked for a better coach and he knew everything there was to know about the sport. He was almost like my father as my real Dad had left when I was three. I lived with my Mom, brother Jace and sister Annie. Jace was nineteen and played basketball in college. Annie was twelve and she did gymnastics. Annie had a different Dad to me and Jace but he hadn't stuck around for very long after she was born.

"Today you're doing pyramids and then we'll work on your starts. You have world champs next weekend and I don't want you to trash your legs before that," Coach Carter explained.

I nodded, and started my warm up. Once I'd finished I changed into my spikes. Spikes were specially designed trainers for running on the track, and they had little triangle-shaped 'spikes' on the bottom. They were much better than normal trainers. Mine were purple, my favourite colour.

I didn't mind training but I didn't really enjoy sessions like these where I was by myself. It just wasn't as enjoyable. My best friends had all grown up on the track like me. We'd all gone to our first competitions away together, and they were my second family.

"You did good today, Speedy. I think you're definitely prepared for World Champs." Coach grinned, patting my head and messing up my braids.

I smiled back, but winced as I put my right foot down. For the last few weeks my Achilles in the top of my heel had been sore and it was getting worse. I used ice packs and taped it up before training but nothing was working. I couldn't tell anyone about it or I wouldn't be allowed to run in the Junior World Championships. They weren't the Olympics, but it was still an extremely important competition to me. I knew I'd just have to work through the pain. Athletes did it all the time right?

I got changed into leggings and a tank top, even though it was practically 100 degrees outside. North Carolina was ridiculously hot at this time of year. I should've worn shorts, I told myself as I got outside and walked towards my car. I'd just gotten my license a few months ago, and as a birthday present, I got a car. Purple, of course.

Growing up, my family hadn't always had it easy. Since Dad had left, Mom worked full time, sometimes night shifts too. She was a nurse. But she only got her job when I turned twelve. For years before that, she worked as a cleaner. She barely got paid anything and we didn't have a lot of money. Most of the time we couldn't afford rent and I'd lost track of how many apartments we'd

been kicked out of. Mom had thrown Jace and I into sports as soon as we were able to walk to distract us from life at home. I don't think she ever expected us to be any good.

The rest of my week went smoothly, although my foot was still hurt really badly. On the Wednesday before World Champs, my whole family and I flew out to Bydgoszcz in Poland, where they were being held. I was very lucky that my best friend Caleb, from Illinois, was running too. He did the 1500m. I didn't get to see him very often and when we did get to spend time together, I was always at my happiest. I was good friends with everyone on the USA junior athletics team and we all kept in contact throughout the year. This would be our last competition before Rio. Caleb was the only other junior going to the Olympics with me.

On the first day of competition, I won the women's 200m. It wasn't a PB but winning meant a lot to me. It was the second year in a row that I'd won, and I'd achieved bronze the year before. I only had the 100m left and I was beyond nervous.

I'd made it through the heats and semi-finals quite easily. It made me sound ridiculously cocky, but I'd won both. There was only one downside to all of this. The majority of girls here were all white, European. There were very few black women like me. And people always expect black athletes to be faster. I hated that. The girl who was fastest after me, Lotte Wicht, from Germany, was white. She wasn't much slower than me either.

The atmosphere in the stadium was unreal. People from all different nations cheered on the other 7 girls in my final. I heard the announcer telling everyone "Lane 5, Hayley Montgomery, USA." More screaming. The starter called "On your marks!" and I did my ritual which I did before every race. Jump up twice, slap my legs and kiss the charm bracelet I wore on my wrist. I was given it by Jace for my thirteenth birthday and I hadn't taken it off since.

Getting into my blocks, I was shaking. The starter raised his arm holding the gun and called "Set!" I pushed into the blocks and took a deep breath.

The gun fired and I shot out of the blocks. People were screaming my name. I pumped my arms and I knew I was in the lead. But at the 50 metre mark, I felt my Achilles going. Something snapped and I stopped running. I think I screamed, and I fell to my knees in pain, watching my competition pass me. Lotte Wicht won.

Tears streamed down my face as the reality hit me; I would not be going to Rio.