

Tiffany Ofili Porter - Ypsilanti 2005



Dreams become real when you work hard enough at it. When she retired, Tiffany (Ofili) Porter recalled her first encounters with the sport at elementary school field days: “I would race (and beat) all the other boys and girls my age, and then be rewarded with ice cream after. That’s when I learned that I had a deep love for competing and the adrenaline rush was addictive.”

Coached by Tom Micallef and Chris Jonik at Ypsilanti High, Tiffany Ofili won the 300H in a meet record 44.04 in her first D2 finals as a 9th grader, after taking second in the 100H. As a junior she led Ypsilanti to the team title, ending a 7-year Renaissance streak, by winning both hurdles and placing 2nd in the 100. In 2005, her senior year, she won three events in meet records (14.19, 42.82, 18-9.25) but was 2nd in the 100 with her 12.50. She graduated with 6 individual state titles, plus one on a relay.

At Michigan, Ofili met with just as much success under the tutelage of James Henry and Arnett Chisholm. She won three-straight NCAA hurdle crowns (2007-2009). She also won NCAA Indoor titles in 2008-9. Along the way she also captured 9 Big 10 titles. She wasn’t just about sports, though. She earned her Ph.D. in pharmacology in 2012.

In 2010, Ofili made the decision to represent Great Britain internationally. She told a British journalist, “I knew I was going to perform no matter what vest I had on. I have always regarded myself as British, American and Nigerian. I’m all three.” She weathered some criticism after the change but persevered and continued to train and race as a pro. In 2011, she married fellow Wolverine alum Jeff Porter, who himself would become a 2-time Olympian for the United States. She competed with a hyphenated last name for a while, and then as Tiffany Porter.

In her long career as a professional, she earned great honors in the sport’s toughest competitions. In 2011, a silver in the European Indoor Champs, and 4th in the World Outdoors. In 2012, she won silver at the World Indoor and in her first Olympics, she made the semis of the 100 hurdles. In 2013, she captured bronze at the World Outdoors with her 12.55. In 2014, she won bronze at the World Indoors and outdoors she won European gold. She closed the season with a 12.51, which would be the fastest time of her career.

In the 2015 campaign she would finish 5th in the World Championships in Beijing. The next year she won another World Indoor bronze and in her second Olympics, she placed 7th in the final. In 2017, she made it to the World Championships but did not get past the heats. In 2021, as a mother of a toddler, she won Euro Indoor bronze, and made it to her third Olympic Games, where she placed 5th in the semis. In all, she won 7 British national titles. Six seasons she was ranked among the world’s top 10 by *Track & Field News*. Her sister, Cindy Sember, an Ann Arbor Huron grad, is still racing professionally and has competed in two Olympics so far.

In a 2012 interview with The Guardian, Porter recalled watching the Olympics with her father as a young girl. "I remember watching it on TV and turning to my father and saying: 'Dad, I want to run in the Olympics one day.'

"He looked at me, very seriously, and said: 'Tiffany, you know what? If you continue to work hard then, one day, you will.' That moment sticks out in my mind. It just resonates with me. I was lucky that, from such an early age, my family believed in me. And I had the determination to do it."

