

2022 National USATF Junior Olympic

Track & Field Championships

## USATF Pacific Youth Features

By Bob Burns



### Ashanti Elie

Rocklin, CA

Gold, High Jump, Women 17-18 Division



Dyestat.com, [RunnerSpace.com](https://www.runner-space.com) Interview

[https://www.dyestat.com/gprofile.php?mgrou\\_p\\_id=44531&do=videos&video\\_id=334880-Ashanti-Elie-1st-Place-Women-039-s-17-18-High-Jump-USATF-National-Junior-Olympic-Track-and-Field-Championships-2022](https://www.dyestat.com/gprofile.php?mgrou_p_id=44531&do=videos&video_id=334880-Ashanti-Elie-1st-Place-Women-039-s-17-18-High-Jump-USATF-National-Junior-Olympic-Track-and-Field-Championships-2022)

The USATF National Junior Olympic Championships gave Ashanti Elie a chance to close her season on a high note.

With the exception of one major blip, the speedy high jumper from Whitney High School in Rocklin had a breakout year in 2022. She twice cleared 5-10, the highest jump of the season by a California high schooler, and her sprinting ability helped Whitney's 4x100 relay reach the CIF State Meet.

Elie entered the state meet as the favorite in the high jump but failed to qualify for the final. Anchoring Whitney to an eighth-place finish in the sprint relay didn't offset her disappointment. She entered the Junior Olympics as an unattached athlete not aiming to clear a certain height but to do something she loves.

"I had a lot of fun being out there with the other girls," Elie said after winning the girls 17-18 high jump at Sacramento State in late July with a leap of 5-5. I wasn't looking for a personal best or a specific height. I love to compete, and I thought JOs would be a good way to finish up my season."

Elie has only been high jumping for two years. Growing up in the Bay Area, her main sporting interest was gymnastics. After outgrowing gymnastics and moving to Placer County, she excelled as a freshman printer on the Whitney High School. The summer before her sophomore year, the 5-foot-6 Elie discovered a new passion.

"I fell in love with the high jump," she said. "My best events in gymnastics were the floor and beam, so it kind of made sense. High jumping is not just about clearing the bar. It's about the art of the entire motion."

She cleared 5-2 as a sophomore in the COVID-restricted season of 2021 and took a huge leap as a junior, consisting jumping 5-6 or higher throughout the high school season. She finished second at the prestigious Arcadia Invitational at 5-10 and won her league, section and masters titles.

In retrospect, Mark Snow, the head track coach at Whitney, thinks Elie's subpar performance at state was the result of competing too often and doing too many events in the regular season.

"We'll sit down before the upcoming season and talk about her schedule," Snow said. "State meet is going to be a really big motivator coming in her senior season. She's a very hard worker. It's pretty impressive to watch."

Elie is a “speed” jumper, which means she relies on a quick approach at least as much as her natural spring to clear a bar set four inches above her head. Her best time in the 100 meters is a wind-aided 12.19 seconds, and she’s also a good 200-meter sprinter.

With a personal best in her main event of 5-10, the next logical step is 6 feet, the gold standard for female high school jumpers.

“I have goals, but I don’t want to talk about marks,” she said. “I’d rather focus on technique and training and see how high I can go. That’s what works best for me.”

Elie has received interest from a number of college coaches and considers Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo her top choice at this point.

“I’m in love with the high jump,” she said. “I love doing it, I love watching it. It’s not about just clearing the bar. It’s about the art of the whole thing.”