

# Spoiled by God

Cancer doesn't throw Smith's life off track

By Neil B. McGahee

Despite losing her knee to cancer a year ago, former Georgia Tech track star Shanta Smith says God spoils her. In fact, she maintains a Web site — [www.spoiledbygod.com](http://www.spoiledbygod.com).

"I always wanted to go out and motivate kids," Smith, Mgt 05, said. "But before the cancer, I didn't think I had anything to talk about. Now I do."

Smith enrolled at Tech in 2001 on a track scholarship and leaped to an ACC championship in the triple jump in her freshman year and ran on Tech's champion 400-meter relay team.

In her sophomore year, she broke her own triple jump record and earned All-ACC honors in the triple jump and the 400. As a junior, she broke her triple jump record again. She was voted an academic All-American all three years.

"Back in high school in Miami, I dreamed constantly about being an All-American," she said.

But the dream went awry.

By the fall of her sophomore year, she was experiencing difficulty running and felt sharp pain in her right



CAROLINE JOE

Cancer ended Shanta Smith's track career. Now she motivates girls through the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and as a huddle leader.

leg when she tried to walk. "I couldn't get up on my toes when I ran," she said. "I kept asking myself, 'Is this real or am I mental?' I kept trying to run through it, but by the spring season, I knew something was wrong."

X-rays revealed a stress fracture, requiring her to use crutches for six weeks, undergo surgery and then be back on the crutches for six more weeks. The good news, the doctors told her — she would be back in time for senior year conditioning.

On the second day of conditioning, Smith failed to clear a hurdle and tore her anterior cruciate ligament. An MRI revealed an even more ominous

situation — a cancerous tumor was growing on the back of her right knee.

"At least I found out why I could never bend my leg all the way back," she said. "The doctors showed me the location of the tumor and explained it was low grade and probably not life-threatening — but I would have to get a fake knee.

"I remember thinking, 'What do I pray for? Do I pray for healing?' I grew up in church and I heard all the time about God healing people so I wasn't really afraid. I just knew God had my best interest in mind so I just asked him to do his will," she said.

A year after the knee replace-

ment, Smith is back at Tech, working at the Athletic Association as a study hall monitor and academic coach, pursuing a master's degree in international affairs and tending her Web site.

A member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, she serves as a huddle leader, or as she tells it, "a mama duck to a group of 10 or so high school girls" during FCA conventions.

"We talk about peer pressure, abuse, alcohol and drugs and I tell them how God helped me with my struggles. I always come back thinking 'God, you spoil me so much.'"