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# A youth 'on track' until fatal gunfire

## Football player's dreams die in a flurry of bullets in South L.A.

By Paloma Esquivel, Paul Pringle and Francisco Vara-Orta, Los Angeles Times Staff Writers  
March 4, 2008

Stanford University called about Jamiel Shaw a week or so ago, intrigued by the slight but speedy running back for Los Angeles High School, the Southern League's most valuable player last year. Rutgers University called a few days later.

The Shaw family already had reason to be proud. Jamiel's mother, Army Sgt. Anita Shaw, was on her second tour of duty in Iraq.

On Sunday night, it was Jamiel's father on the phone and then his son's girlfriend, Chrystale Miles. Jamiel Sr. called to tell him to hurry home from the mall. The 17-year-old boy was three doors away when someone shot him to death while he was still talking on his cellphone to Chrystale, friends say.

Jamiel Sr. heard the shots almost as soon as he hung up. He ran out of the house, raced around the corner and found his son lying on the sidewalk, bleeding.

"She's over there trying to protect us from guns and bombs, and then she has to hear that her son is dead over here," he said of Anita on Monday. "I've got my own personal Iraq now."

Los Angeles police officials described the killing as random and senseless, cutting down a youth who had been doing everything right in his life -- from hitting the books to never missing church to inspiring the Los Angeles High Romans to last year's Southern League title.

A police spokeswoman said two Latino men pulled up in a car, jumped out, asked Jamiel if he belonged to a gang, and shot him when he didn't answer. She said Jamiel was not affiliated with a gang and that detectives had no suspects.

Anita Shaw was flying back from Iraq on Monday, family members said.

"She called crying, saying, 'Tell me it's not my son,' " said Jamiel's aunt, Althea Shaw. "She was so proud. She felt he had made it through the hard times. She still called him her baby, even though he was taller than her."

Jamiel Sr. said he had "an 18-year plan" for their son, whose ultimate

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goal was to become a sports agent: "I would tell him, 'I'm going to get you to 18, and if you do what you're supposed to do, you'll get to college,'" the father recalled. "He was almost there."

The youth's football coach, Hardy Williams, was with the family Monday at their 5th Avenue home, where Jamiel's trophies and medals lined the mantel. His 9-year-old brother, Thomas, wore Jamiel's favorite Atlanta Braves cap. Tears flowed.

"He was a very special kid," Williams said. "Not only was he an outstanding athlete, he was a good person. I've never seen Jamiel mad. He had such a big smile."

The coach described his standout player as "a Houdini on the football field," and the numbers backed it up. As a junior, Jamiel rushed for more than 1,000 yards last year, averaging just over 14 yards per carry. An invitational All-City first-team selection, he scored 11 touchdowns, returned punts and kickoffs, and played defensive back. He also competed in track.

Hours before he was shot, Jamiel had spent the day at a football camp at Pasadena City College, Williams said.

"Stanford just called me about his transcripts," he said. "Rutgers called a couple of days ago. He was just on track. . . . He was very elated."

Jamiel's teammates called him the "the spirit of the team."

"I went through most of today thinking it was all a joke," Colletti Scorza, an 18-year-old junior, said of his death. "I thought he'd make it to college on a football scholarship and then be in the NFL someday. . . ."

"I don't know how we're going to fill the void on the team and as our friend."

Scorza and another teammate, Rayvione Mouton, 16, had hung out with Jamiel on Friday.

"I remember I told him, 'I'll see you Monday!' " Rayvione said. "But now I know I won't ever see him again."

The two students said gang violence is less common in Jamiel's neighborhood than in areas south and east of L.A. High. They also said there had been no tensions between blacks and Latinos. Jamiel was black.

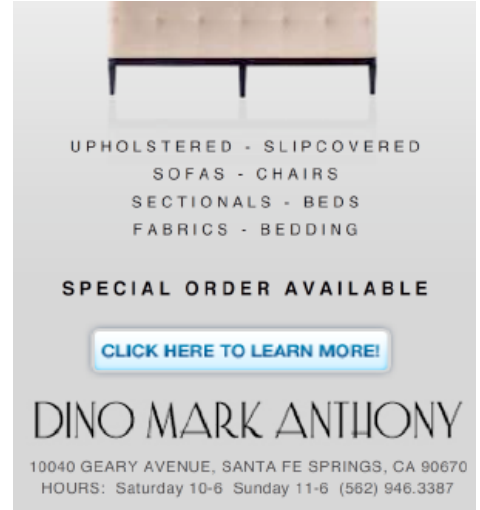
Chrystale's brother, Romans defensive end Willie Miles, said she was not up to speaking late Monday. He said she told him she was talking to Jamiel on his cellphone when she heard the car pull up and someone ask him "where he was from," code for which gang he belonged to.

Miles said his sister heard what she later realized was gunfire.

"It was like a long gust of wind," he said. "The phone went dead after that."

On the sidewalk where Jamiel fell, mourners created a memorial of blue and white candles and flowers, L.A. High's colors.

Jamiel Sr. recalled the horror of seeing his son down on the pavement, and said that his boy had never missed a game because of an injury.



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"When he went on the field, he never came out," the father said. "He'd never been hurt. This is the first time I saw him hurt."

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