

# Francie Kraker Dreams Of Olympics

By Ron Tanguay

In 1960, Francie Kraker took an interest in the Olympic Games and the amazing performance of Wilma Rudolph. "It was just an interest, nothing special, and I didn't know that I had any potential," she candidly admits.

In 1962, the pert, 15-year-old Ann Arbor lass has been learning she has an ability for running 440 yards faster than other girls and women. Now there is an "active interest" which is triggering fond dreams of travel and perhaps . . . "it's almost too much to dream for" . . . an Olympic appearance.

In 1964, it is believed that Miss Kraker will have at least a slim chance of making the U. S. Olympic team—IF.

In 1968, it is firmly believed that she will make the Olympic team, but again there is that qualifying IF.

The beliefs in her future and the "IFS" were expressed by Mrs. Kenneth Simmons and her husband, Miss Kraker's coach and advisor, respectively.

The Simmons, who live at 831 Tappan Ct., believe that if Miss Kraker can endure the hard work and self sacrifice required of an Olympic athlete she has a chance in 1964 and is a certainty for 1968.

"It would surprise us if Francie did make the 1964 Olympic games, but then Francie is a surprising girl," Simmons said.

Her brief track history and her record of five victories



FRANCIE KRAKER

and only one loss would bear out this statement.

Her rise in track began in the fall of 1961 during a physical-fitness program at Slau-son Junior High. Miss Kraker caught the attention of Mrs. Simmons, a physical-education teacher, during the program when she toured 600 yards in less than two minutes.

The Simmons began encouraging her to develop her potential and when she expressed willingness, a training program was started and arrangements made for her to

compete in meets this spring.

Miss Kraker suffered her only defeat in her first meet, the Chicago Track Club Open, when she went against some of the best in the nation. Her trip to the Windy City was a Junior High graduation present from her parents, Dr. and Mrs. Ralph Kraker, 517 East Ann St.

That was the last time Miss Kraker has seen heels and elbows in front of her. In her five successive victories the proud and—at the moment—only member of the new Ann Arbor Anns Track Club, has accrued a couple of interesting times.

One of these was a 64.2-second effort which was good enough to win the Michigan AAU Open Championship. The other was a 1:03.9 clocking. The latter is only six-tenths of a second off the state AAU record for senior women. The women's world record for the 440-yard dash, 53.7 seconds, is held by a Russian.

Thus, Miss Kraker has come a long way in a few short months. She still has a long way to go before she is ready to compete in the Olympics or to challenge for

world records.

The Simmons base their 1964 and 1968 predictions on several factors.

"She has a natural stride, which we have never tried to change, good speed, and intelligence," they explained. "She never forgets her instructions and learns quickly."

The Simmons' also concur with Miss Kraker's mother concerning the young athlete's competitive nature. "She has always had to be the best in everything she has attempted," Mrs. Kraker said.

Those who wish to be the best in athletics must train. Miss Kraker's training began indoors last October. The program consisted of three half-hour sessions a week during which she ran 220-yard dashes, jogged, and practiced starts. Since then the only variance has been in lengthening the distances of her dashes.

In setting up the training program, the Simmons have years of experience to offer.

Mrs. Simmons has been a physical-education teacher in grades one through 12 for the past 12 years. She is a graduate of Eastern Michigan University where she met her husband who was also studying physical education.

Simmons, who is a physical-education instructor at the University of Michigan and freshman track coach, lettered in track, boxing, and basketball at Eastern Michigan.

And what do Dr. and Mrs. Kraker, who also have two other daughters, Leslie, 12, and Marilyn, 16, think about their daughter's track interest and plans for the future?

"We are very pleased to see her take part," Mrs. Kraker answered. "Neither of us can claim any athletic prowess but we have always encouraged our children to be active in sports. And you know today you see so many children who just sit around doing nothing."

Miss Kraker is not a girl to sit around doing nothing. Aside from her track activities, the honor-roll student plans to attend college and pursue her interest in art. She also plays the piano, admitting to a fondness for jazz, swims, dives and "I just like to take part in all kinds of sports."

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