

# Blonde M Coed Brightens Track Scene

## 'Francie' Aims For Olympics

Track and field buffs will remember the front cover of an issue of a leading sports magazine dramatizing a story on the revolution in women's distance running in the United States.

Flashing in living color across a field of Kansas redbud trees were a pair of pretty U.S. teenagers who were illustrating the proposition that girls can be distance runners and retain their femininity.

If a photographer wanted to put across the same message today, he might make a tour of this month's major indoor meets and settle on an 18-year-old Ann Arbor lass who might pass in other surroundings for a fashion model.

She's a striking figure warming up before a meet—blonde hair flapping behind as she jogs around in a powder blue sweat suit labeled simply, "Francie . . . Ann Arbor."

And she's even more striking during a half-mile race, at which she happens to be the hottest talent in the country right now.

Her name is Francie Kraker, a Michigan freshman and the daughter of Dr. and Mrs. R. F. Kraker of 517 E. Ann St.

Francie has thrust herself into athletic prominence this year by holding her own against international veterans—the most recent race Saturday in Louisville, Ky., when she clocked 2:12.8 for 880 yards, fastest time by an American this season.

Winner of the race—by a tenth of a second—was Antje Gleichfeld, a German Olympic finalist and holder of the world's 800-meter record outdoors.

Miss Gleichfeld, interestingly enough, already has lost to Francie this season, as have Roberta Picco of Hamilton, Ont., Sandra Knott of Cleveland and Abby Hoffman of Toronto.

Escaping this category by inches is Marie Mulder of Washington, D.C., a 16-year-old who has been publicized as

the best of the United States' budding young women distance runners. Miss Mulder, who has a U.S. indoor record of 2:11.4 pending, edged Francie for second place in a race in Boston.

Francie has a third place to add to her two seconds this season. She gets her next chance for a victory Friday night at the New York Athletic Club Games against an all-star field that is expected to include Miss Mulder and Szabo Nagy of Hungary, co-holder of the world indoor mark of 2:10.5.

How good is Francie, who, like Miss Mulder, is six to 12 years younger than most of the world's top women distance runners?

Her coach, Kenneth G. (Red) Simmons, says he thinks that, at the moment, she is America's best: better than Mulder and capable of shooting for the U.S. record.

"Francie is a better mechanical runner than Mulder," he declares. "She's a smoother strider and she has more nat-

ural speed, too. Although I don't think she'll ever be a great speed runner, she has this deadly sense of pace that's going to start paying dividends."

The biggest difference between the two, according to Simmons, is conditioning. A physical education instructor for the University, Simmons has made it a point to bring Francie along slowly.

"She hasn't reached her peak yet—not by a long shot," Simmons explains, adding that this is her first year of hard training, compared to two to three years for most other runners, including Mulder.

Francie's background of running dates back four years to a 600-yard time trial as a ninth grader at Slauson Junior High.

Simmons and his wife, Elizabeth, had returned from the Tokyo Olympics with the idea of starting a girls' track club—of which Francie was the charter member.

Mrs. Simmons, then a physical education teacher at Slauson, picked Francie out of a group of girls running in a physical fitness program.

"She asked me how I'd like to train for the Olympics, and I just thought it might be something interesting to do for a change," Francie explains.

"I didn't really do too much for a while, but I placed sixth in the women's 440-yard run in the 1963 Pan-American trials, and I began thinking to myself, 'Hey, I can actually beat some of these people.'"

Francie went on to place second in the women's indoor 880 in the 1964 national championships. It was her first major half-mile race and followed her failure to qualify for the 440 finals.

"The 880 field was weak—that's why I placed second—but we decided then that the half-mile was my race," she points out.

Add a 1964 national girls' 880-yard title and a 1965 failure to qualify for a European trip by failing to place in the top two in the women's national championships—her biggest disappointment—and you have Francie Kraker's competitive history to date.

What is it that makes a young girl want to compete in track and field—a sport considered distinctly not feminine until willow Wilma Rudolph brought back three sprint championships from the 1960 Olympics?

"Well, since I started winning races, running has become sort of a compulsion with me," explains Francie.

"It's not so much for the fame—getting on the cover of a magazine is not important to me—but if I didn't run, I just wouldn't be the same person I am now. Running and conditioning have become a pleasure for me, and I might just keep going after my competitive career is finished."

As for goals in the foreseeable future, Francie would like to get down to the world's record time of 2:10 indoors this year—it's an inferior record compared to the standard at the slightly shorter distance of 800 meters anyway, she says.

Outdoors, where she expects to do her best running because she won't have to negotiate the tight turns built into most indoor tracks, she'd like to break 2:10 this year and make the U.S. team for the dual meet with the Soviet Union.

The 1968 Olympics in Mexico City is her next target—one for which she's willing to drop out of school a whole year to train.

Her potential outdoors is somewhere around 2:04, better than the U.S. record, according to Simmons. He thinks she might be even better at 1,500 meters, an event not yet added to the women's program.

By the time Francie decides to cut off her career, Simmons expects to have his Michigames Track Club established beyond its present membership of about 25 girls.

In fact, he's got Francie's heir apparent already picked out—12-year-old Mickey DiMattia of Ann Arbor.

"I don't know just what it is she's got, but she's already broad-jumped 15 feet and run 1:37 for 600 yards—and that's 21 seconds faster than Francie was running when she was 14."

For the time being, however, Francie isn't quite ready to exchange her spikes for a rocking chair.

# M Gymnasts, Cindermen To Battle Talented Foes

## Illini Present Major Threat

By Joe Broshear  
Michigan's undefeated gymnastics team will see double action this weekend when Illinois, also undefeated, and Minnesota invade the Wolverine domain.

Like Michigan, the Fighting Illini have won their first four conference starts and are deadlocked with Michigan and Michigan State for first place. The Wolverines, who dethroned Illinois for the Big Ten gymnastics title five years ago and have retained possession ever since, expect their strongest challenge so far from the Illini, led by sophomore Bill "Cookie" Rollo, parallel bars and trampoline, Hal Shaw, vaulting and floor exercise, and Captain Bill Silhan.

Silhan and Michigan's Gary Vander Voort are currently ranked second and third in regional all-around standings behind Michigan State's Dave Thor, a Wolverine opponent this weekend when Illinois, next week.

Vander Voort, third place winner in parallel bars at the Big Ten meet last year, will be pitted against Rollo in that event while Michigan's Wayne Miller, 1965 AAU national trampoline champion and a winner of six straight in dual competition this year, will face Rollo in his specialty.

"Illinois looms as our toughest home dual meet," said Michigan coach Newt Loken in discussing the contest which will be held in the Sports Building at 7:30 p.m. Friday.

Among other members of the Illini squad who are expected to offer the Wolverines some outstanding competition are Dick Weber, a bar specialist, and John Eliason, one of the best sidehorse men in the country.

While a win for Michigan would greatly enhance the Wolverines' chances of a sixth straight Big Ten gymnastics title, Illinois is in a "make-or-break" position.

From Ann Arbor, the Illini travel to East Lansing where only two weeks away, Michigan they will face the Spartans Saturday.

Consequently, the Illini could come out of the weekend with a 4-2 record while the Wolverines and Spartans might conceivably have 6-0 slates by Sunday.

Minnesota faces the Spartans Friday night before moving on



CARL WARD



GEORGE CANAMARE

## Notre Dame To Run Here

By Dave Good  
Michigan's track team will run through a 15-event dress rehearsal for the Big Ten Indoor Championships by meeting Notre Dame tomorrow night in the season's first dual meet for each school.

Field events will begin at 7 p.m. in Yost Fieldhouse and the first running event is slated for 7:30.

With the conference meet only two weeks away, Michigan Coach Don Canham expects to go with the lineup he probably will use in pursuit of Michigan's sixth Big Ten indoor crown in eight years.

"We should be a real tough dual meet team this year because we're so well balanced across every event," Canham explained during Wednesday's

too, and unless we perform, it could be a close meet."

Michigan will be near peak condition for the meet. According to Canham, football half back Carl Ward, who turned an ankle last week in a 60-yard dash semifinal, appears to be all right.

Michigan's winners back from last year's dual meet are high jumper Bob Densham, pole vaulter George Canamare, sprinter Dorie Reid and shot putter Jack Harvey, who had a practice toss of 57 feet Tuesday.

A sidelight to tomorrow's meet will be a pair of exhibition races for some of Canham's top freshmen.

Tom Kearney, Ron Kutschin, ski, Taimo Leps and John Reynolds will run the half-mile, and Jim Olson the two-mile. Olson

## College Cage Scores

STATE  
Albion 77, Alma 43  
Hope 44, Olivet 59  
Calvin 85, Adrian 81 (ot)  
Hillsdale 108, Windsor 81  
Aquinas 112, Ferris State 95  
Michigan Tech 90, Northland (Wis.) 84  
Port Huron CC 92, Henry Ford CC 73  
Muskegon JC 99, Grand Rapids CC 90

MIDWEST  
Chicago Loyola 77, Dayton 72  
Xavier, Ohio 82, Marquette 78  
Toledo 71, Bowling Green 44  
Evansville 84, St. Joseph's, Ind. 74  
Indiana State 97, DePauw 90, overtime  
Ball State 75, Butler 45  
Albion 77, Alma 43  
Buffton 88, Wilmington 48  
Ohio Northern 85, Ashland 76  
John Carroll 71, Case Tech 48, overtime

EAST  
Villanova 93, St. Bonaventure 81



## Fashion Model?

Although Ann Arbor's Francie Kraker can strike the pose of a fashion model she doesn't do any modeling and spends most of her free time trying to improve her running techniques. She is one of the nation's foremost female distance runners.

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