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Women's Track Hits High Mark in State

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State Journal Sports Writer

Women's track is no longer a laughing matter. As recently as five years ago, the distaff side of track was not taken very seriously in this country, even by buffs of the sport.

But that's been changing recently and women's track is starting to come into its own. "I think girl's track is getting more accepted now," said Vonda Gerow, coach of the Lansing Lightningettes. "In fact, the girls probably have a better AAU program in the state than the boys do."

The girls will cap that program Saturday when the Michigan AAU girls' and women's championships are held at Waverly High School.

Approximately 155 entries from around the state will compete in the 26-event program, which will start at noon with preliminaries. The first running final is set for 2:45 p.m. with the meet expected to wind up about 5:30.

The fact that there are 155 entries illustrates how women's track has grown in the state.

"Three or four years ago there were only a dozen or so girls in track," said Mrs. Gerow, who is also the meet director, "but now we have 300 to 400 in girls track around the state."

The meet, open to the public free of charge, will be divided into two divisions—girls (ages 14 to 17) and women (17 and above).

The first three placers will receive medals while two team trophies will be awarded in the women's division.

Meet referee will be Hayes Jones, Olympic high hurdles champion who is chairman of the Michigan AAU girls' and women's track division.

Most of the entries will come from such suburban Detroit points as Ann Arbor, Utica, Lincoln Park, Ypsilanti and Garden City but there also are athletes from Lansing, Dowagiac and St. Louis.

Two of the meet's top athletes are from Ann Arbor. Francie Kraker will be the big favorite in both the 400 and 800-meter runs while Louise Garrish is the top entry in both the discus and javelin.

Miss Kraker has run the 800 in 2:08.7, one of the top times in the world this year, while Miss Garrish has a best mark in the javelin this season of 164 feet, 3 1/4 inches, 13 feet beyond the meet record she set last year.

The top Lansing entries include Anna Payne, Mary Dudley and Pam Jones.

Miss Payne, a Michigan State sophomore from Eaton Rapids, will compete in both the shot put and discus but probably will be hampered by a leg injury suffered in the pentathlon championships at Utica last week.

Miss Dudley, a 15-year-old East Lansing High School sophomore, will be one of the top sprinters in the girls division. She has bests of :11.5 in the 100-yard dash and :26.9 in the 220. Miss Jones will be in the long jump.

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