

## Detroit's Young Sprinter

# She's Running Toward Munich

**BY CHARVN SETTON**  
*Free Press Staff Writer*

Joanne Marie Woods runs briskly around the outdoor basketball courts at Pelham Jr. High, 12th and Myrtle, almost every afternoon.

Joanne, a perky 14-year-old who says very little and laughs as she runs, is practicing. And she plans to keep practicing until she has enough speed to take her to the next Olympic games in Munich, Germany. **She will probably make it.** At a recent track meet, she was clocked at a sizzling 5.53 seconds for the 50 yard dash, a scant five-tenths of a second off the United States record. For a sprinter so young, that is phenomenal. And Joanne has several years to improve on it; the Olympics don't come up again until 1972.

Joanne began running competitively almost by accident. Shortly after she enrolled in 7th grade at Pelham, she tried out for the track team. With her natural speed and ready enthusiasm, she made the team with ease.

The team — known officially as the Pelham Athletic Club — was already two years old and well established in local track circles when Joanne reached Pelham. It also had qualified for listing with the Michigan Amateur Athletic Union, making it the only junior high school girls' track team in the state with A.A.U. standing.

But times had not always been so good. According to Mrs. Willie Evans, the coach still with the team, the beginning years were quite lean.

"We began with 12 girls in December, 1964," Mrs. Evans explained as she watched Joanne and several of her teammates practice.

"By the summer of 1965, when we began a actual competition, we had about 50 girls. But we still only had those original 12 pairs of shoes. Girls would wait at the finish line of one race just to get track shoes to wear in the next one.

Despite the hardships, Pelham girls won races and set some records in competitions all over the state. And by September, 1966 when Joanne entered, a Project II grant had enabled the Inner City team to at least get sufficient equipment for all the girls involved.

Last year, while Joanne was in the 8th grade, her track aspirations got an unexpected boost. Wilma Rudolph, the world-famous American sprinter, came to coach the Pelham team for nine months when Mrs. Evans was ill.

Wilma has already done what Joanne Woods hopes to do. In 1960, Miss Rudolph brought back three gold medals from Olympic competition — and Joanne now runs faster than Miss Rudolph ran when she was 14.

But though Joanne is fast, getting to Germany won't be easy. The Pelham team, which has subsisted since 1964 on donations and grants, has run out of money. Joanne almost didn't get to an important regional competition this month in Terra Haute, Ind. because money was so scarce. Germany is a lot farther.

Nevertheless, Joanne won't let anything keep her from reaching the top by 1972.



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Joanne Woods: Pelham AC star

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## Joanna Woods 8-10-1969

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