

Amateur Scene

She's 18 . . . And Always On the Run

BY CHARLIE VINCENT
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Pam Bagian just doesn't look much like an athlete. In the first place, she is much too pretty. In the second, she is much too frail. But neither her looks nor her slight build could have kept her—at the age of 18—from becoming one of the nation's outstanding women distance runners.

Pam, who admits to liking "just a little" when she says she weighs 100 pounds, will be one of six women to represent the United States in the Women's World Cross-Country Championships in Spain in March.

But that's nothing new to Pam. She finished 14th in the same event last year.

"I haven't always had this kind of success," she is quick to admit. "I started running when I was in the eighth grade, because some of my girl friends were in Mr. Bayst's class and he got them interested in running. I just kind of tagged along."

Dick Bayst, a former middle distance man at Lincoln Park High School, formed the Lincoln Park Parades in 1965. Out of it has evolved the 146-member Wolverine Parades, of which Miss Bagian is the most renowned member.

"Mr. Bayst has any problem. It is that she is too good," claims Bayst, a 39-year-old bachelor. "On most other teams she would be running sprints, but she is just too good in distance events for us to let her ignore those. And the hurdles are really her favorite event."

Broke Her Leg TWICE

But the hurdles are strictly off limits. Bayst feels she is too frail to run the grueling event.

"This girl has broken her leg twice—the right one in 1966 and the left one in 1967—and she keeps coming back. The first time, she didn't even realize the leg was broken until she had run on it for four months," Bayst says, shaking his head.

At one time or another the Little Wayne State freshman has taken part in most every event available to her. She's run a 100 in the 10, a 25.2 in the 25, a 50.1 quarter-mile, a 2:11.2 half, and a 4:38 mile.

Her best two miles is 10:58.

She also throws the javelin and takes part in the high jump and long jump.

The Michigan AAU recently named her the state's outstanding woman track athlete for 1970. And it's not hard to see why—she picked her.

So far this season she has won the Canadian National Cross-Country championship, the Junior National Women's 800, state titles in the two miles, 400 and 800 and finished third in the mile in the National AAU Indoor Championships at Madison Square Garden.

Pam plans to take some time off after competing in the 1000-mile run at Hamilton, Ont., later this month.

Watch Out for Cars!

The event, through the streets of Hamilton, has been run annually since before the turn of the century.

"There's nothing else like it," Pam says, flashing her little pearly grin. "They don't stop traffic or anything. You just have to look out for the cars when you go through a red light."

"Last year I knocked a man down. He was crossing the street and I yelled at him but he just looked at me. I didn't have much choice except to run into him."

Apparently it didn't knock her off stride—she won the event for the second consecutive year.

A realist in addition to being a perfectionist, Miss Bagian admits her goal of participating in the 1972 Olympics may be out of reach.

"I just don't know. They run the 1,500 meters and I am not good enough to run that event now. I've got a long way to go. But I think most everyone who runs has the idea of running in the Olympics in the back of his or her mind."

March is still two years away and who knows what worlds little Pam Bagian may conquer by that time?

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