

Trying Is Reward Enough

BY LARRY EDSALL
The Grand Rapids Press

Deby LaPlante knows she probably won't win the gold medal this summer at the Olympic Games in Montreal ... but that doesn't mean she isn't going to try.

And it's the same for dozens of other Michigianians who share Deby's dream. Most of them won't even make the U.S. Olympic team, but it won't be from a lack of sweat and sacrifice.

Most of them know they will watch the Olympics on television and read about it in the newspapers, but they'll be in Montreal, nonetheless, in spirit if not in person.

The curly-haired person of Deby LaPlante, however, is virtually certain to be in Montreal two months from now, marching behind the American flag as the Games of the XXIst Olympiad officially open.

Like most of Michigan, you never may have heard of Deby LaPlante, even though she should be America's leading entrant this summer in the women's 100-meter hurdles races.

Deby has hurdled her way to Africa, Europe, the Soviet Union and China; to American and World indoor records; to a silver medal in the Pan-American Games last summer in Mexico City, and to the U.S. national championship at the recent Amateur Athletic Union indoor finals.

And yet, the 22-year-old native of the downriver Detroit suburb of Taylor has hurdled in anonymity, which is something else she shared with most of the state's native and resident Olympic candidates.

They, like America's other anonymous amateurs, are noticed only once every four years, when the country interrupts its televised trance of professional and major college competitions.

But the time for that interruption is here. Be alert, Michigan. Here come Deby and her fellow dreamers.

And pay attention, because one of them may be your neighbor, and the next time you see him (or her), he (or she) may be mounting the victory stand to receive a medal in Montreal.

Some of them have stepped onto Olympic victory stands before. Others joined Deby on the medalists' platform at the Pan-American Games last summer and still others have won collegiate and other championships as they've chased the gold that awaits at the end of the Olympic rainbow.

Many Michigianians have won Olympic medals, and two of them may seek additional honors this summer in Montreal. They are Marcia Jones Smoke, of Buchanan, who may at-

tempt to qualify for her fourth U.S. Olympic team, and Don Behm of East Lansing.

Mrs. Smoke was the bronze medalist in women's kayak racing at the Tokyo Games in 1964 and also paddled at Mexico City in 1968 and at Munich in 1972. Behm was a silver medalist in freestyle wrestling at Mexico City.

Weightlifter Fred Lowe of East Lansing was a member of the U.S. Olympic teams at Tokyo and Munich and is

considered to be a leading contender for a berth on the American entry at Montreal.

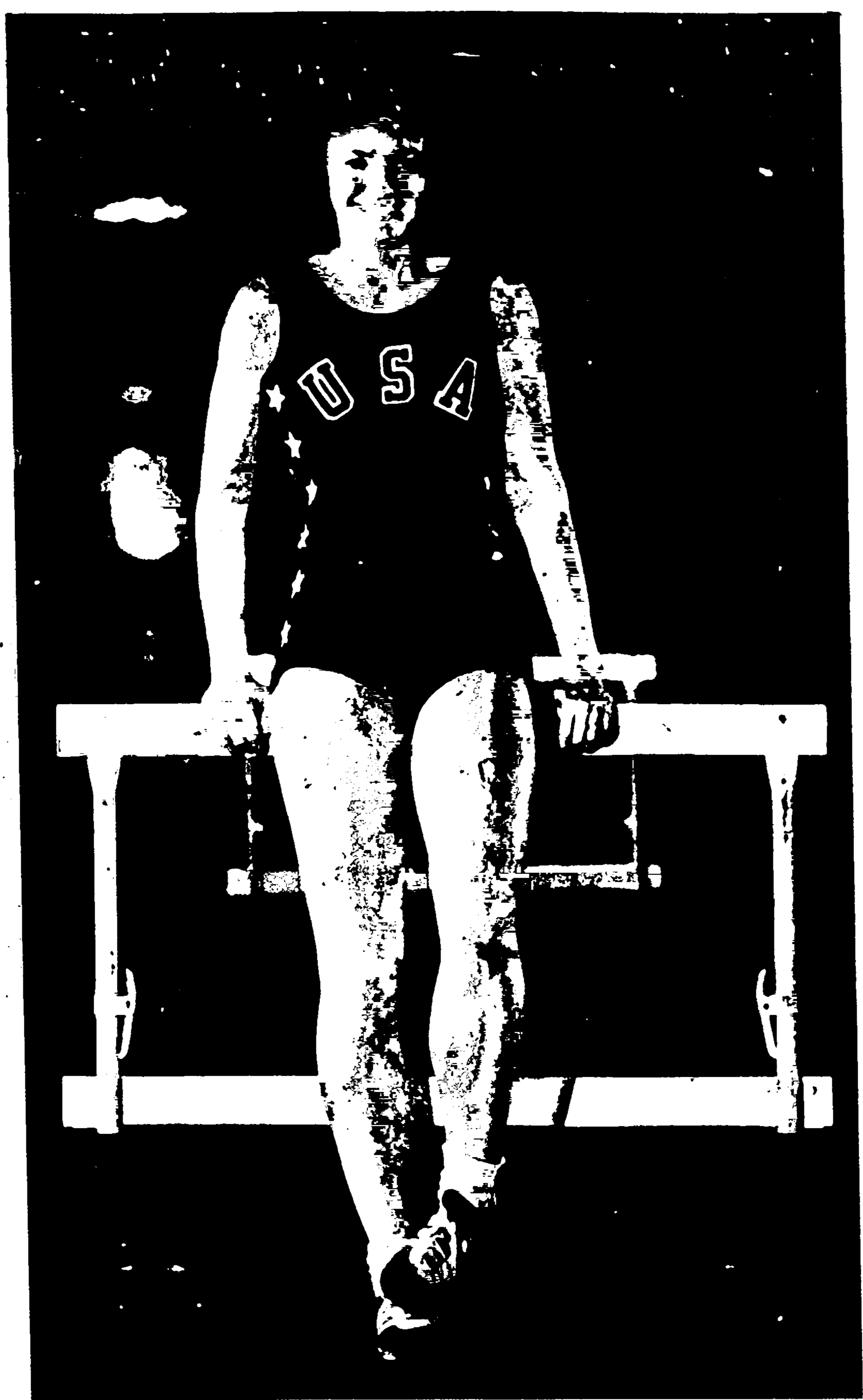
LaPlante, Smoke, Behm and Lowe may be unknown within their own state, but at least most of Michigan is aware of Roger Young's sister, Roger, of Detroit, was a member of the team pursuit squad which won a gold medal in bicycle racing last summer in the Pan-Am Games at Mexico City.

By the way, that same team pursuit

group is considered to be a strong contender for a medal in Montreal. And if it wins such a trophy, maybe Roger will become almost as well known as his older sister, Sheila, who won three medals — one each of gold, silver and bronze — in speedskating at the recent Winter Olympics in Innsbruck, Austria.

Sheila also is an excellent bicycle racer. In fact, she and Sue Novara of

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Hoyt Carrier II

Deby LaPlante's Dream: The 1976 Olympics

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AAU championships

Trying For Olympics Is Reward In Itself

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Flint both have been recent women's world cycling champions.

And both Sheila and Sue would be overwhelming gold medal prospects at the Montreal if women's cycling were included on the program. It isn't, however, so all Sheila can do is cheer on her brother, Roger, and her fiance, Jim Ochowicz.

With Sheila and Sue sadly sidelined, Michigan's leading candidates for gold medals are brother Roger, one of the state's four basketball players who are seeking positions on the American team, and trackmen Hasley Crawford, Reggie Jones and Stan Vinson.

The Amateur Basketball Association of the USA has invited 56 players to the Olympic Trials May 30-June 5 at Raleigh, N.C. A dozen of them will be selected for the team which will attempt to win back the gold medal which the U.S. had monopolized until those fatal final three seconds four years ago in Munich.

Four of those 56 candidates are from Michigan. Three of them — Rickey Green, Phil Hubbard and Steve Grove — played on the University of Michigan's NCAA runnerup team this past season. The other, Tom La Garde, of Detroit, was on the U.S. team which won the Pan-AM Games gold medal last summer. LaGarde is a student at the University of North Carolina, where he plays for U.S. Olympic Coach Dean Smith.

Among Crawford's chief competition at Montreal may be Reggie Jones, a University of Tennessee trackman from Saginaw. Jones is co-holder of two world records — in the 100-meter dash and as a member of Tennessee's 800-meter relay team. He also has been the national collegiate champion in both the 100 and 220-yard races, and is considered to have his greatest potential in the longer of the two Olympic Dashes.

As french hurdler Guy Drut recently said, "in the Olympics, you only have three Americans to beat." Among those who must beat many more than three of their fellow Americans in Eugene could be Ken Popjoy, a former Michigan State University distance runner; intermediate hurdler Rob Cassleman of Grand Rapids; high jumper Dennis Adama of Newaygo, and middle-distance runner Randy Veltkamp of Grand Rapids, all of whom have been rated no worse than fifth in their respective events in the United States. Also planning to be at the track trails is Bill

Lundberg, a former Jackson Community College steeplechaser.

Scott Cranham, a diver from East Grand Rapids and the University of Indiana, was a member of the Canadian team at Munich and already has qualified for the 1976 Canadian team.

Michigan also could contribute Behm, Stan Dzedzic, Tom Muir and Larry Avery, all of East Lansing; Joe Sade of Madison; Mike Bradley of Ypsilanti; Jimmy Jackson and Pete Lee of Grand Rapids, Mark Mangianti of Mount Clemens and Tom Busman of Coppersville to the U.S. Olympic wrestling team.

Don Lengerfeld of Pontiac may join Lowe at the weightlifting trials, while Gary P. Sypchalski of Bay City, Jack L. Quigley of Adrian and Earl Ham of Detroit are candidates for the U.S. pistol shooting team.

Wayne State's national collegiate champion fencer Greg Benko is a Hungarian-Australian who may compete in the Olympics, probably for Australia, while Steve Danoski and Uure Rabonovich, both of Wayne State, could be U.S. team candidates, as could William Goering of Southfield.

Carol P. Grant, of Hartland, Nancy Harris, of Metamora, and high school student Nancy Polozker, of Bloomfield Hills, are among the state's leading equestrian riders while Bruck Barton, of Jackson; Pete Dayo, of Niles; Loli Flood, of Niles, and Rene Hilaski, of East Grand Rapids, all would like to ride kayaks in the Olympic Games.

The Groendin sisters, Kathy and Louise, of Hamilton, may enter the U.S. archery trials, while Ed and Fred Lehnertz, of Kentwood; Jessie Gallegos, of Lansing; Dale Grable, of Clarkston; and Eddie Stokes of Kalamazoo are among the Michigan boxers who are seeking spots on the U.S. contingent for Montreal.

Two Battle Creek residents, Coach Mick Haley and player Janet Baier, are members of the U.S. men's and women's volleyball teams, but those squads have failed in their efforts to qualify for the Olympic Finals in Montreal.

Most of Michigan's other Olympic hopefuls also will fail in their quest for a two-week residence in the Olympic Village. But perhaps "fail" isn't the proper verb.

After all, how can anyone who dreams the Olympic dream and strives for its ideals be called a failure?