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# Her jersey tells it all—state champ Beth Brunn

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All heads turn as she enters the track. Frisbees stop flying and runners stop warming up. Before the meet even begins, she is the center of attention. The back of her jersey tells it all: State Champ Brunn.

One boy watching as she crosses the field whispers to another, "Boy, could you imagine being as great as Beth Brunn?"

She has All-American looks with an All-World tan and appears to be in command of the situation at all times. If they only knew.

Brunn has been a state champion since her freshman year. She competes in the high jump, long jump and the 110-yard low hurdles and does them all extremely well.

If the Philadelphia 76ers' Lloyd Free is the "prince of mid-air," Beth is certainly the "princess of mid-air."

But like a man without a country, Brunn is a girl without a girls track team.

There is, however, Mary Brunn, Beth's sister, only a freshman but destined to be a state champion, too — perhaps as early as next year.

But that's it for the Utica High School girls track team.

**THAT MAY BE PART** of the reason track is Beth's least favorite sport, in which she may never compete in again after the Free Press Girls State Invitational Track Meet, June 10 at Warren Fitzgerald.

Instead, Beth will spend her college days playing basketball for Rose Swidzinski at Oakland University. Beth was also named to the Free Press first-team Class B All-State basketball team as well as being an all-league volleyball performer.

"I never did like track," Beth admits. "I don't want to do it in college. I never expected to be as good as I was in my freshman year. I do like the reward of being state champion, but I feel I have to defend it every year.

"I like the feeling of being scared before I compete. That's the only time I do well — when I'm scared."

Unfortunately, Beth hasn't been scared too often. She doesn't get the opportunity. Because Utica has no girls track team, she can't compete in dual meets in the Oakland A League.

**THAT MAKES IT HARD** for Beth to keep her interest between meets.

"Beth does not practice excessively by any stretch of the imagination," said Frank Morrow, the Utica boys track coach who works with Beth. "But that's not to discredit her. It's a difficult situation for her with no team. She misses that esprit de corps. It would be an incentive for her to practice.

"And there's nobody out there for her. The only coaching she gets is what I happen to give her in passing. She's a Lone Ranger."

Although she may appear to be quite self-sufficient, Beth has longed to have some teammates.

"I've wanted to be on a team since the ninth grade," she said. "I need to be obligated to practice. Your teammates make you run harder in practice. I couldn't let them see me dogging it. That's been the biggest hinder to me this year."

This year Utica is competing in Class A and at last week's regional in Port Huron, Beth qualified for the finals but did not place first in all three events, which she had done in each of her first three years.

**SHE MAY NOT LIKE** track, but that doesn't mean she will settle for second best.

"Beth fouled on her last long jump attempt and finished second in the regional," Morrow said. "She was so upset she went to the middle of the field and cried.

"Driving to the league meet she told me: 'I can handle losing to a boy, but I can't handle losing to a girl.' Beth has the capacity to rise to the situation. She can reach down and bring out a reserve. I'm sure she'll do quite well in the state finals."

In the Oakland A championships, Beth and Mary finished one-two in the high jump and Beth easily won the hurdles and tied for first in the long jump.

"I think Mary is better than I was as a freshman," Beth said. "She's already jumped 5-9. But she's got an attitude like mine and she's lazy like me. I think a team would make a difference.

"I don't want to compete in track in college because they just work your buns off. But I'm willing to do it for basketball. I like team sports because all the worry is not just on me.

"And basketball didn't come easy to me, I've had to work at it. It will be a challenge but I can't wait until I get on a team where all the girls are good. That will really make me work."

So the track career of Beth Brunn, young superstar, has only three meets left — an invitational in Romeo next Wednesday, the state finals and finally the Free Press meet.




Since she was a freshman, Utica High's Beth Brunn has been on top of her track and field specialties —



Free Press Photos by ALAN KAMUDA

This is the Utica High girls' track team: Sisters Mary Brunn (left) and Beth, the "Lone Ranger."

## Beth Brunn feature 5-27-1978

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