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# Motor City runners need a lift to get to the Junior Olympics

By MICK McCABE  
Free Press Sports Writer

The Detroit area will be well represented at this year's AAU Junior Olympics at the University of Nebraska — if the team ever gets there.

Thirteen youngsters between the ages of 14 and 17 qualified this past weekend to compete in the AAU Junior Olympic track and field championships on Aug. 12 and 13. But they are faced with the never-ending struggle for transportation.

Richard Ford is the girls coach for the Motor City Track Club and he has faced the transportation crisis for the last 13 years.

"I've worn out four cars in 13 years, and I'm working on my fifth," said Ford. "Our season starts the first of December and we're all over the country and in Canada almost every weekend."

Unless Ford can come up with a car dealer who will lend him a van, he will be forced to cram seven girls and his wife into his station wagon for the long drive to Lincoln, Neb.

And Ford only coaches the girls, meaning there is also the problem of getting the boys to the meet.

SEARS SPONSORS the Junior Olympics but does not pay for transportation or room and board for the athletes. Each of Ford's girls has to come up with \$45 for room and board, in addition to a share of the gas money.

"Most of the coaches from around the country I've talked to say they get car dealers to donate them a van for the whole season," Ford said. "That's what we need. Once Hal McGuire, who coaches some of the girls, bought a station wagon and donated it to the club."

Many of the local AAU representatives would like an airline to pickup the tab for flying the kids to Lincoln, but Ford, who can be reached at 842-7965, would settle for a van or two.

Besides the use of his car, Ford spends more than \$2,000 a year out of his own pocket on the girls. He also uses all of his vacation time traveling to the different meets with his girls.

Ford, who works for De-

roit's housing department, is getting a reputation throughout the country as one of the finest girls track coaches around. This year his Motor City Track Club features 880- and 440-yard star Delisa Walton from Detroit Mackenzie and hurdler Kim Willis from Southgate Aquinas.

THE WINTER meets Ford's girls compete in take them to places like Ohio State, the University of Chicago, Cleveland, Toronto and Montreal.

"There aren't many track meets around here," said Ford, "so we have to go looking for them. We'll go to To-

ronto four times a year and we'll run against the best people in Ontario.

Just the other day somebody called me from somewhere in Canada and asked me to bring a relay team and a quarter-mile and a half-mile to a meet around Aug. 17."

It's quite easy to understand why the Motor City Track Club is in such demand. Ford's girls are the best.

"Every year we have someone or a relay team in the top five in the country," Ford said. "Last year we had the fastest women's 880 relay team in the country."

The 54-year-old Ford was an all-city trackman for three years at Miller High a good number of years ago. He also ran for the Army during World War II.

"About 1955 somebody asked me to coach their girls," Ford recalled, "and I've been at it ever since. Every year I say I'm going to quit but now I've got twice as many girls as I had before.

"I try and leave the boys alone, the girls are easier to coach. In a way the girls are easier to coach and a little more dedicated."

Ford is especially proud of this year's group. All 10 who were seniors in high school are headed for college on scholarships.

Willis is headed for Ohio State; Rochelle Collins, Kim Watts and Carmen Rivers will attend Texas-El Paso; Angella Johnson will go to Wisconsin; Vada Allen has a scholarship to Delaware State and the other four will attend state schools.

"I know a lot of college coaches," Ford said, "and they respect my judgement. Vada Allen hasn't run a good time yet but it looks like she will so the Delaware coach took my word for it."

Ford doesn't have much trouble getting the girls into college because they all have good grades.

"I don't have to ask to see their report cards, they bring them in and show me," he said. "The girls are fabulous, I love them all. I don't have to control them, they control each other."



Richard Ford

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