

# 'Soul Train' eyes title in '81 Mehock Relays

By Mike Van Sickle  
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DETROIT, Mich. — The "Soul Train" is heading for Mansfield.

Don Cornelius, who hosts the popular television show, won't be coming along. But he won't be needed either. The soul and inspiration of Detroit Central High School's Motown Express is Coach Woody Thomas.

"The Good Lord has to be kind and you have to be lucky, too," said Thomas. "But we feel we have more balance this year and that if things fall together for us we can win."

Central was runner-up to powerhouse Lancaster in last year's team race at the Mansfield Mehock Relays. If Thomas' prayers are answered, his team has an excellent chance of copping the first Mehock title for a Michigan school since 1968, when Pontiac Central tied with Cleveland Kennedy.

The basis for Central's enthusiasm is the return of its super sprint star Demetrius Hallums, some excellent supporting talent in the relays events and superior hurdlers in Tom Wilcher and Shawn Abernathy.

"We have very talented athletes," admitted Thomas, who directed Central to a Michigan state track crown last spring.

Thomas doesn't have any special training techniques for his thinclads, but does admit to his athletes' use of a certain diet.

"We're an inner-city school, so we can't ask parents to give our kids steak and eggs for breakfast," smiled Thomas.

"We go strickly on 'soul food' for our energy. It's black-eyed peas and cornbread. Man, I can't complain about the way it works for us."

Thomas has set what he called "a seven-step ladder" for his team this year

and so far, Central has climbed the first two rungs.

"We've won the two biggest indoor meets in Michigan — the Huron and Spartan — already and our next step is Mansfield," Thomas maintained. "After that, it's the Blade Relays in Toledo, then the Dayton Roth Relays, the state regionals and the city and state championships."

In 1980, Central won five of those seven meets, missing out at Mansfield by a wide 20-point margin to Lancaster.

"You can never know about Mansfield because there are always so many power teams," said Thomas. "We're not running as a power team yet, but we have a lot of young people and I hope by this weekend we'll be all right."

Wilcher will be a key in the 110 and 300-meter hurdles, as well as the anchor man on the shuttle hurdlereley.

He was second in the 110 lows in 1980



at the Mehock with a 14.5 and goes into this year as the event favorite. His 37.0 in the 300 lows will make him a strong threat in that event as well.

In the shuttle hurdle relay, Central will add Abernathy, Valee Wells and Bruce Threatt to give Central a good bet of improving on its 1:00.9 first-place Mehock time of 1980.

Other fine times in the 110 hurdles belong to Darryl Calhoun of Middletown (14.4) and Alex Washington of Gary (Ind.) Roosevelt (14.5).

In the low hurdles Hammond Indiana's Derrick Young, with a 37.3, will be in the running, along with Anthony Saine of Dayton Roth (37.1), Calhoun (38.2) and Dewayne Burnett of Gary Roosevelt with 37.1.

## Woody Thomas feature 4-8-1981

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