

200-mile trip pays off in a 1st-place medal for Fitzpatrick

By HAL SCHRAM
Free Press Sports Writer

For someone who had to get up at 4:30 in the morning, Kathy Fitzpatrick got a great deal of satisfaction out of Saturday.

Fitzpatrick, a senior at Muskegon Montezuma High, traveled the nearly 200 miles to Warren Fitzgerald High School with her West Michigan track club to compete in the fourth annual Free Press State Girls Invitational track and field meet.

It was worth the trip. She won both the 100-yard dash in 11 seconds flat and the 400 in 57.4 seconds on a bright and sunny day.

Fitzpatrick finished second in the state high school meet in the 220-yard dash, but passed up the event Saturday. "I was afraid I'd have to run too many beats in

the preliminaries if I entered both the 100 and 220," she explained.

THE MEET attracted about 400 athletes from all sections of the state, and the medals were equally well distributed.

Kathy Burr, for instance, only came four miles from Warren Mott to win the 220, place fifth in the 100 and take a third-place medal in the 440-yard relay.

One of the happiest winners was Julie Ravary from Erie-Mason High, near the Ohio border.

"It's just a Class C school and winning the discus here today was certainly much more important than winning the Class C state medal," she said. "Here's where you find the top competitors." Ravary won the discus with a throw of 126 feet, nine

inches, more than six feet better than her nearest competitor.

WENDY TRUVILLION, who goes to Pershing High just two miles south of Fitzgerald, won the 800 in 2:18.5 after finishing second in the same event a year ago.

"I had to wait a full year to earn this first place medal," she said. "I'm pretty tired but I guess the wait was worth the while."

Kelly Graham of Westland John Glenn was another

double winner. Graham, a junior and a state champion, won both the 110- and 220-yard hurdles and wore a wide smile. "The weather was just great and I love your medals," she said.

Two sophomores were among the happy winners. Kelly McKillen of Dexter captured the two-mile in 11:33 while Jennifer Riox from Livonia Ladywood took home the first place medal in the mile in the excellent time of 5:08.4.

Free Press girls track

Pierce hangs up her track shoes for basketball at U-D

By MICK McCABE
Free Press Sports Writer

Regina Pierce was basking in the warm sun Saturday afternoon, sitting in the bleachers at Warren Fitzgerald High, contemplating her future.

Pierce had just won the long jump for the second straight year at the Free Press State Invitational track and field meet. She realized it may have been the last time she ever competes in a track meet.

She's good enough to make that significant. A week earlier, Pierce placed second in the Class A state championship, and her winning jump Saturday of 18 feet, 5 3/4 inches is no reason to stop now.

But Pierce's future is not in track. First and foremost, Pierce is a basketball player. In four years of varsity basketball at Jackson, the 5-foot-6 Pierce scored 2,276 points, the most ever by any girl basketball player in Michigan. She's a two-time basketball All-Stater.

Pierce probably could combine her track career with basketball in college, but she has chosen the University of Detroit — which does not have a women's track program.

And so Saturday's Free Press meet may have been her last.

"I've been thinking about that more and more," she said. "The only way I'll be able to continue in track is if I work out on my own and go out and get a coach."

But she chose U-D over a school with a women's track program because "I love basketball," she said, flashing her fabulous smile. "It's close to home so my mother can see me play, and then there's the field I'm going into — dentistry. Besides, they have a program that might be able to win a national championship some day."

"They've won the state (championship) and they've got all their players back. But I think I should be able to squeeze into the lineup as a guard."

IT WAS BECAUSE of basketball that Pierce began running track in the first place. She would have preferred to play softball, but when a coach told her track could help in basketball, that was all she needed to hear.

This year Pierce decided to run the hurdles, and in only one year she became good enough to place sixth at the Free Press meet.

"I used to run the quarter and half-mile," she said.

Big Eight honors gymnast, cager

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — (AP) — University of Oklahoma gymnast Bart Conner and Kansas State basketball ace Rolando Blackman have been named together as athletes of the year in the 1980-81 Big Eight Conference.

Conner, who was on the 1980 U.S. Olympic Team, is a four-time Big Eight all-around champion. He led the Sooners to the 1981 Big Eight gymnastics crown.



Regina Pierce lands in the long jump, an event she won with a leap of 18 feet, 5 1/4 inches. Saturday's meet may have been her last.

"but there was no sense running those if I wasn't going to do well in the state meet. I thought I could be competitive in the hurdles, and it helps me in my long jumping. The way your right knee is pointed going over the hurdles is the same idea as the long jump. You've got to get your knee as high as you can."

Both events have helped her basketball skills. She is a lightning-quick guard who can hit the outside jumper or penetrate and take the ball to the hoop.

She began playing basketball in the fourth grade. By seventh grade, she noticed she was different from the other girls.

"Every team I played on in grade school always won the championship, no matter what," she said. "I used to play with my brother, Billy, and he told me I was good. I practiced a whole lot and practiced with guys. They treated me like I was one of them."

"But I've still got a lot of improving to do. Last month I went to the Midwest Olympic Trials and made the final 20 before I was cut. It showed I have to put in more time if I want to be the best."

And if that means giving up track... well, then Saturday's meet was the last for Regina Pierce.

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