



Detroit Henry Ford's Cheryl Pruitt soars over high jump at the West Side track championships. Pruitt is a two-time city high jump champion.

Pruitt fuels Ford's track team

By JOE BALLON
From Press-Scimitar Staff

Detroit Henry Ford's track team only has eight members, but coach Troy Walls does have one big plus — senior runner/high jumper Cheryl Pruitt.

Pruitt, a two-time city high jump champion who won the state 400-meter run as a sophomore, helped the Lady Trojans to a second-place finish in last week's West Side championships and a fourth-place finish in the 10-team Benton Harbor Charles Gray Invitational last Saturday.

Pruitt won the high jump (5 feet, 4 inches) and the 400 (57.54) at the West Side championships and ran the lead leg on Ford's first-place 3,200-meter relay with a time of 2:22.

Pruitt also ran in Ford's second-place 800-meter relay, helping the Lady Trojans take second overall with 129 points. Detroit Cockey (172 points) finished first.

"She did very well in every race," Walls said. "She knows that because our numbers are down that she has to do very well. With us, it's a case of quality more than quantity."

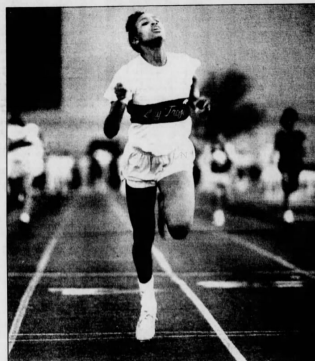
Pruitt also excelled at the Gray Invitational. She high jumped 5 feet, 4 inches, winning first place in that event, but didn't run the 400 because of a sore leg. She did compete in the 3,200 relay, running a 2:24 split, helping the Lady Trojans to another first place.

WALLS HOPES Pruitt's strength and versatility will help Ford do well in the city championship and Class A regional meets. The Lady Trojans, who won the Highland Park regional the last two years, have been transferred to the Southfield regional this year.

The Southfield regional is Saturday, beginning at 2 p.m. The city championship meet will be Tuesday at 2 p.m. at Martin Luther King's Lorenz Wright field.

"I think we'll do well," Walls said. "We intend to win the regional. I want to get when the girls didn't win the West Side or the Benton Harbor meet because we're still trying to peak. We started late because I'm the volleyball coach, so the girls know they're getting better every time they run. Their times have been consistently going down."

Pruitt's success isn't limited to track and field. She has been the captain of Ford's volleyball team the last two years. Since she



Cheryl Pruitt finishes far ahead of the competition in the 400-meter run at the West Side championships.

became a starter, the Lady Trojans haven't lost a single Public School League match and have won the city championship three straight years.

A 5-foot-8 setter/outside hitter with a tremendous vertical jump, Pruitt was named to the Detroit Plus "Dream Team" this past season.

"I owe all my success to coach Walls," she said. "I wasn't even going to participate in sports at all, but I had him in my eighth hour sports class and he kept telling me that I should be an athlete and compete."

"I was scared, but I told my parents (Sherry and Calvin Pruitt) and they said to go ahead, that it would benefit me in the long run. I'm really glad I did participate and my parents have been very supportive."

Pruitt's younger sister, Rhonda, is Ford's hurdler. She also qualified to the city meet in the 400.

CHELYL PRUITT's athletic versatility and 3.5 grade-point average could soon force her to make a decision. Numerous colleges are recruiting her, including Stanford, Michigan, Minnesota, the U.S. Naval Academy and several Mid-American Conference schools.

Most of the schools are interested in her track success, but none have totally ruled out her participation in both sports.

"The volleyball better than track," she said. "I like to be with people and be with a team. It's more exciting and more fun. With track, you have so many aches and pains. With volleyball, you don't have that."

"I'm going to go for track most likely (at college), but when I get there I'm going to let the coach know right away that I'd like to try volleyball, too. I haven't come across a college yet that has said I couldn't do both."

Before Pruitt's college career begins, she has another assignment — to help the Lady Trojans improve on last year's third-place finish at the state meet.

"I expect Cheryl to break the state record in the 400, I really do," Walls said. "She hasn't been pushed and she's already broken her school record twice."

Our two-mile relay team (Pruitt, Rhonda Culler, Robbi Browner and Charisa Courtis) is also going to be a team to contend with. We finished fifth in the state last year for the two-mile relay and the three girls returning know the level of competition. I expect us to be one of the top three teams in the state."

And a large reason for Walls' optimism is the athletic ability of Cheryl Pruitt, a young lady who wasn't even going to participate, but who now seems destined for even greater success.

Clipped By:



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