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PREPS

# Pioneer's Braddock makes dedication pay off

## Sprinting champ headed to Texas

BY SCOTT WALTON  
Free Press Sports Writer

Crystal Braddock, the Ann Arbor Pioneer sprinter bound for the University of Texas, is not all she wants to be. Nor is she all that she will be. But she thanks God daily for making her more than she was.

"Crystal's far ahead of where we thought she'd be when we started working together six years ago," said Ann Arbor Pioneer and Ann Arbor Track Club coach Brian Westfield. "She didn't have lots of natural ability. What she's accomplished was the result of a positive work ethic and a great amount of spiritual faith."

Somewhere, Braddock's friend from Sunday school at Second Baptist Church, Sonya Brown, is kicking herself, then dropping off the pace herself. And watching Braddock has taught Westfield to look out for other blessings in disguise.

"When I first met her at age 12 I wasn't impressed at all," Westfield said. "She was very small and gangly and was reluctant to lift weights. But she wanted to do well and was very disciplined as far as practice goes."

"Today, Crystal's still not muscular, but she's very, very strong."

"She'll find how strong when she attempts to defend her Class A 100- and 200-meter state championships in June. Over the weekend in Dayton's Ohio Roosevelt Relays, she won the 100 (12.19 seconds) and 200 (25.97) in a meet with some of Michigan's and Ohio's toughest teams.

At last month's Michigan State Spartan Relays, she ran a meet record-breaking 55 meters in 6.61. She ran impressive hand-held times in the 100 (11.5) and 200 (24.81) at Kalamazoo's Lady Knight Invitational.

Last year, she was the indoor 300 meters junior national champion with a time of 36.3 seconds.

"My senior season has gone well so far," Braddock said. "I've been healthy in spite of the cold weather, and that's a blessing in itself. My times are consistently faster than last year. But that's not saying it's going to be easier later on."

But nothing good comes easy, she believes, and perseverance produces things worth cherishing. Perhaps that's why Texas sought Braddock.

"What impressed them more than anything else was her gradual development," Westfield said. "It was something they could see progressing as she got stronger and her times improved."

"They're also impressed with the fact she can run lots of events. She could probably move into the 800 meters and be competitive. That range of ability and strength Texas liked."

Running for Texas virtually guarantees Braddock international exposure as well as the best possible training facilities and serious intrasquad competition.

Braddock's mother, Diane Huddleston, wanted Crystal to choose Michigan State because it would keep her close to home. The warmer climate, coursework selection and support systems at Texas ultimately helped Braddock decide.

"That recruiting process was like 'Nightmare on Elm Street,'" Braddock said. "I'm less consumed by stress now. All I have to do is concentrate on my running."

USA Today and the Track and Field News rank Braddock in the top 10 nationally in the 100 meters. Such recognition hasn't adversely affected her attitude toward training.

Westfield says Braddock is as diligent in the classroom as on the track. And she has become more sophisticated — dissecting her workouts to better understand what can be improved.

"God has helped her develop," said Westfield. "She has tremendous faith in herself, what she's doing and the fact that she's been blessed."

Blessed with a college education her mother probably would have been unable to finance.

"I was hoping something great would come along, even if it was just a little (monetary) assistance," said Huddleston. "I just thank God he's blessed her with good health. I got her started in all this to keep her mind off boys and to develop her body and spirit."


Braddock first came to Westfield's summer track program with ballet training but no other athletic background.

"It's been intense dedication ever since," she said, "to myself, to Westfield and to the track program."

Now she's on the verge of leaving as one of Westfield's most accomplished performers. Her only regret is that she has not had the opportunity to thank all those who supported her and helped her attend national meets.

"I'm happy with my decision to attend Texas, but it's going to be hard to leave here," Braddock said. "Still, I believe that all those who loved and cared for me and followed my progress will keep on following me."

And why not? On the track, Braddock is accustomed to being followed.



RICHARD LEE/Detroit Free Press

Defending state 100- and 200-meter champion Crystal Braddock of Ann Arbor Pioneer will run for the University of Texas next year.

## Crystal Braddock feature DFP 5-8-1989

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jeffhollobaugh  
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