

Judi Brown – East Lansing 1979



Judi Brown started out at Haworth High in Indiana, hitting 13.7 over the 110-yard lows in summer competition. For her senior year, the 5-11 athlete moved to East Lansing and won acclaim in basketball. Yet she shone more brightly in track, recording bests of 13.9, 55.9.

At her only MHSAA Finals, Brown took 2nd to Kim Turner of Detroit Mumford in the '79 Class A 110-yard lows. She also took 2nd in the 440 to another future Olympian, Delisa Walton of Detroit Mackenzie. That's the closest she would come to winning a state title. Yet in a brilliant career she would end up winning an NCAA title, 4 U.S. titles and an Olympic medal.

At Michigan State, she made All American in 1982, the first year the NCAA offered a women's meet. The next year she won in a meet record 56.44. "I wasn't even tired," she said. "Of course, after I stopped I was." She also won three Big 10 titles in the event.

As a pro the next year, Brown became the first American to break 55 seconds in the event with her 54.99 at the U.S. Champs. A few weeks later she won the Trials with another American record, 54.93. "I kept waking up in the early morning hours," said Brown. "I think if this race were run at 5 a.m., I'd set a World Record. I had run this race 30,000 times in my mind. It's just good to get it over with in reality."

She captured silver in the Los Angeles Olympics, clocking a PR 55.20; initially, she took the defeat hard. "When I sat there looking up at my time on the scoreboard, I was just disgusted with myself."

She responded by getting faster over the next few years. In 1985, she won the Rome GP meet in an American record 54.38. She took her 4th-straight USA title with a meet record 54.45. Her lifetime best of 54.23 came in winning gold at the 1987 Pan-Am Games. She made the finals of the World Championships in Rome that year despite fighting a virus at the time, placing 8th.

In 1988, in her final appearance at the Olympic Trials, she was felled by a heat stroke—yet she still finished 5th.

In all, she made the *Track & Field News* World Rankings 3 times ('84, '85, '87)—ranking No. 2 in the world in '87.