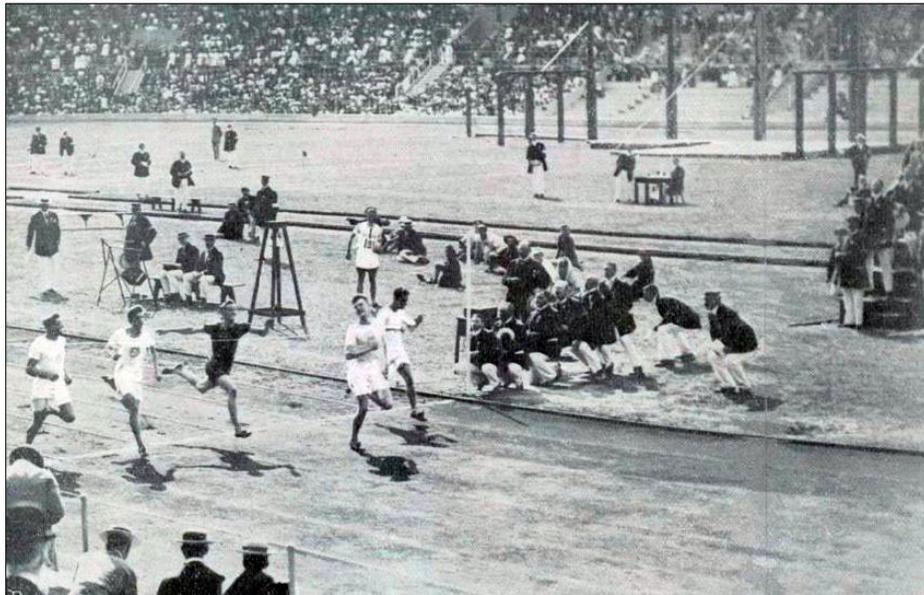


The Michigan Track & Field Hall of Fame



Michtrack

Cover photos: Above-Francie Kraker Goodridge.
Below-Ralph Craig winning the 1912 Olympic 200.

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Introduction

Why a Hall of Fame? It's simple. To inspire Michigan's youth of today and tomorrow. To show them that greatness is possible no matter what path they find themselves on. The stories shared here show such a diversity of pathways to greatness that hopefully, today's athletes can see a path forward for themselves to be the best that they can be, whether they're aiming for the Olympics or simply to earn a varsity letter.

The athletes included all have one thing in common. They attended high school or they began their track & field careers in Michigan at an earlier age. In some cases they were stars during their school days, in other cases they blossomed later. Some, of course, have been stars every step of the way.

What does it take to be included? That's actually a challenging question to answer, as the ultimate goal is that the Hall of Fame reflects "greatness", a word that's hard to define. Winning a state title is sadly not enough. Including relay members, there have been over 26,000 state champions in the history of Michigan high school track & field—and that doesn't begin to count our cross country winners. While multiple state honors help, what really stands out is the athlete's place in history as a transformative performer: achieving what's not been done before, going faster, higher, farther. Dominating on a statewide or national level is key, as opposed to winning everything in a class or division with little competition. Being an All-American or even winning a national title does not make one a Hall of Famer; there are far too many competitions that bestow those awards. Greatness is something bigger.

For the athletes included primarily on the basis of their post-high school accomplishments, it's a little easier to draw up criteria. Indeed, these are the athletes that we initially built the Hall of Fame around. They are the heroes of Michigan track & field and cross country. Participation in the sport's biggest events, the Olympics and the World Outdoor Championships is important. For Michigan athletes who end up representing foreign nations, those accomplishments will be considered but they are not guarantees. It's a truth that Team USA is the hardest team to make.

Other categories that merit consideration: national champions in major events, NCAA champion in individual events, World and American Record breakers in standard events, and so on.

We will mimic other Halls of Fame in one regard: athletes will not be considered until their college or professional careers have concluded.

For some we have written a full account. Unfortunately, we need time and funding to do that for all; gradually we hope these accounts will be completed. In the meantime, we have decided to go ahead and include short summaries so that fans can see the direction that the Michigan Track & Field Hall of Fame will eventually take.

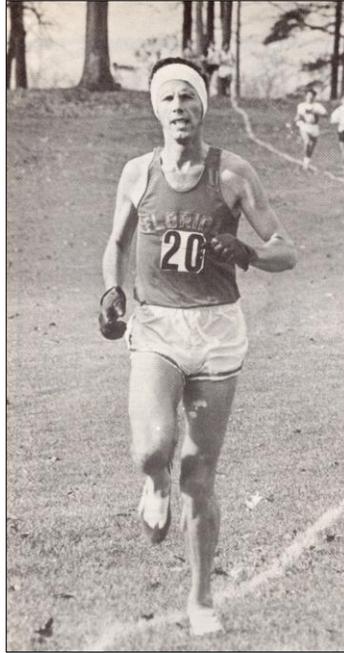
Michigan Track & Field Hall of Fame Inductees

(Entries in alphabetical order; listed with school and graduation year.

*=Short summary account; longer article coming, as time and funding permit.)

Jack Bachelor - Birmingham Seaholm 1962
Eugene Beatty – Detroit Northeastern 1929*
Bill Bonthron - Detroit Northern 1928
Quentin Brelsford – Birmingham 1938
Tia Brooks-Wannemacher – East Kentwood 2008*
Judi Brown - East Lansing 1979
Henry Carr - Detroit Northwestern 1961
Rex Cawley - Farmington 1959
Ralph Craig - Detroit Central 1907
Candice Davis - Ann Arbor Pioneer 2003*
Geena Gall – Grand Blanc 2005
John Garrels – Detroit Central 1902*
Hayes Jones - Pontiac Central 1956*
Reggie Jones - Saginaw 1973
Francie Kraker Goodridge – Ann Arbor 1965
Deby Lansky LaPlante – Taylor Center 1971*
Lisa Larsen - Battle Creek Central 1979
John McLean - Menominee 1897
Paul McMullen – Cadillac 1990
Loren Murchison – Detroit Eastern 1916*
Penny Neer – North Adams 1978*
Frank Nelson – Detroit University 1905*
John Owen Jr - Detroit 1879
Neil "Pinky" Patterson - Detroit University 1906
Tiffany Ofili Porter - Ypsilanti 2005
William Porter – Jackson 1942
Dathan Ritzenhein – Rockford 2001*
Ryan Shay – Central Lake 1997
Eddie Tolan – Detroit Cass Tech 1927*
Kim Turner - Detroit Mumford 1979
Delisa Walton Floyd - Detroit Mackenzie 1979
Willis Ward – Detroit Northwestern 1931
Herb Washington - Flint Central 1968
Bill Watson - Saginaw 1935
Todd Williams – Monroe 1987*
Lorenzo Wright - Detroit Miller 1944

Jack Bachelor – Birmingham Seaholm 1962



At 6-6, Bachelor played basketball for Seaholm High, but as a senior, he decided to try the cross country team. He found he liked it better, saying, “I was skinny and not real aggressive.” In his only high school season he ran 3rd in the mile at the Class A Finals in 4:28.0.

At Miami of Ohio, Bachelor devoted himself to running, and the results came fast. In the '64 Olympic Trials, he placed 11th in the steeplechase. He finished 7th in the NCAA cross country that fall, and in 1966 he was NCAA runner-up in the steeplechase. But longer distances beckoned.

After graduation, he became part of the Florida Track Club where he would put in plenty of miles with Frank Shorter. He made the Olympic 5000 squad in 1968. In Mexico City, he qualified for the final, feeling good in the high altitude. “First, it was enough for me to make the Trials,” he said. “Then when I made them, it would have been enough to make the team. Now that I’ve made the team, I’m thinking about placing.”

However, dysentery struck and Bachelor was unable to even make it to the final.

Over the next few years, Bachelor won two USA titles at 6M/10K and another in cross country. Famous for his brutal training, he and Frank Shorter worked themselves into incredible shape. In 1972, after failing to make the Olympic team at 10,000 (he was passed in the stretch for the last spot, then disqualified), he opted for the Trials marathon, placing 3rd.

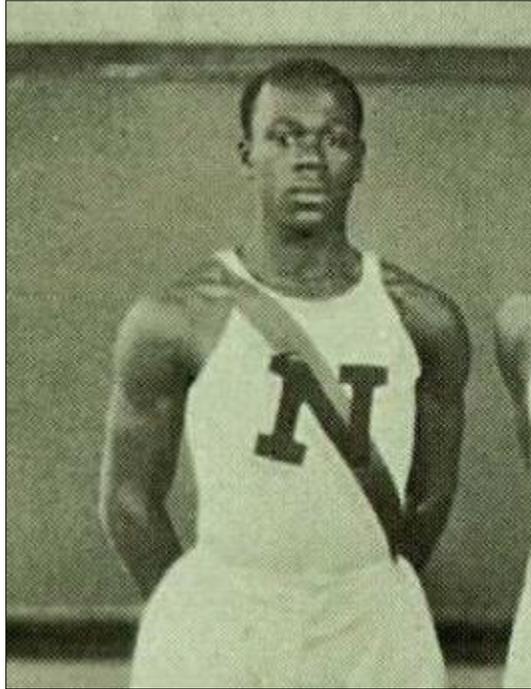
At the Munich Olympics, Shorter won the gold, Kenny Moore placed 4th, and Bachelor finished 9th. It was one of the best U.S. team marathon performances ever. For Bachelor, it was torture. He feet swelled up in the closing miles. Four runners passed him. He lost 9 toenails.

He summed it all up: “If there’s one quality that a distance runner needs above all others, it’s persistence.”

He earned a total of 12 Track & Field News Top 10 U.S. Rankings: steeplechase (No. 6 in '66), 5000 (5 times, No. 1 in '70), 10,000 (5 times, No. 1 in '69) and marathon (No. 3 in '72).

Professionally, he made his career as a professor of entomology; he is currently a professor emeritus at North Carolina State, specializing in cotton pest management.

Eugene Beatty – Detroit Northeastern 1929



Best known as a hurdler, Beatty had incredible strength and range. As a prep sophomore, after he failed to make the finals of the 50-yard hurdles at indoor nationals, he jumped into the half-mile and won the race by 15 yards. Outdoors he won national titles in the high and low hurdles, and was a key leg on Northeastern's 4x2 champions. At the MHSAA level, he won two titles each in the highs, the lows, the long jump, and the 4 x 200. Collegiately, he ran for what is now known as Eastern Michigan, winning the 1932 NCAA title in the 400 hurdles after setting an American Record at the Penn Relays. The heavy favorite to win the 1932 Olympic Trials, he fell while leading at the final hurdle and finished 4th. The winner was disqualified for a lane violation but given the team spot that would otherwise have gone to Beatty, and so he missed competing in the Olympics. Later in life, he accomplished far more than he did on the track. In 39 years working in the Ypsilanti public schools, he founded the nation's first pre-school, the forerunner of Head Start programs that have improved the lives of millions.

Bill Bonthron – Detroit Northern 1928



After Bill Bonthron broke the World Record in the 1500, his track coach at Northern High admitted he didn't remember him too well.

Bonthron ran at Northern for two years before his wealthy parents sent him to the exclusive Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire to finish up high school. He improved to 4:35.0 in the mile, but never broke a school record.

As a Princeton soph, "Bonnie" flourished. He ran 9:25.96 for 2nd in the 1932 IC4A 2 mile. Described as "burly," he trained just as much in the weightroom as he did on the track. His stride was a beautiful, driving motion and his kick was ferocious.

In 1933 he won a 1:53.5/3:53.82 IC4A double. His only loss of the outdoor season came in the Oxford-Princeton dual, where Jack Lovelock of New Zealand broke the World Record in the mile in 4:07.6. Behind him, Bonthron set the American Record with his 4:08.7.

His senior season came close to perfection after a cross country disaster—leading in the final strides of the IC4A he collapsed and was hospitalized, ending his season. He ran well indoors. At the AAU he got nipped by Glenn Cunningham at the 1500 finish, but they both got credit for a World Indoor Record 3:52.2. He then lost to Cunningham's World Record 4:06.7 mile at Princeton in June.

However, he bounced back to win the NCAA in 4:08.9. At the AAU Championships in Milwaukee, he brought down Cunningham with his kick, breaking the 1500 World Record at 3:48.8. He won most of his races on a tour of Europe, setting a World Record 3:00.8 for three-quarters of a mile in Stockholm. The AAU honored him with the Sullivan Award.

Bonthron never liked running, and often said he would retire after college. He went to work as a broker and only ran four races in 1935, losing all of them. Then in 1936, he tried to rally for the Olympics. His speed was good (a WR 1:20.0 for 660 yards), but his results so-so. Then he shocked by winning the Semi Olympic Trials in 3:55.2. At the Final Olympic Trials in New York, he ran 3:53.7—his fastest race since his World Record—but finished a heartbreaking 4th, missing the team by 1.5 seconds. It was to be his final race.

Bill Bonthron died in 1983 in New York at the age of 70, after having spent his working career as a corporate accountant.

Quentin Brelsford – Birmingham 1938



At the time of his graduation from Birmingham High School in 1938, Quentin Brelsford was already something of a legend. He was from a running family—his brothers Harry and Clayton were big names before him. Harry was a school record holder in the mile. Clayton was the Class B runner-up in 1932 and a Big 10 mile champion for Michigan. Quentin said he got his start in running by delivering papers: “As a kid I peddled newspapers and I found out on foot I could do the circuit in town quicker than on a bicycle because I could cut through empty yards and through hedges. That got me running.” He won the Class B title in the half mile three straight years, a feat no one else ever accomplished (not even in the D2 years). He set a state record of 1:55.4 that lasted for 23 years. Then, despite losing what might have been the best years of his running career to World War II, he returned to win the NCAA cross country title.

Career Highlights:

1936 – Won the Class B title as a sophomore in 2:06.1, after winning his regional in 2:05.8.

1937 – Won the Class B title in 2:03.0.

1938 – Set a meet record at Mansfield after a poor start, winning by 50 yards in 1:59.2. Won his third Class B title in a meet record 1:57.6. Two weeks later, at the Michigan AAU meet, he ran 1:55.4 to slice 1.8 off the state record. He led the nation’s high schoolers that year.

1939 - Brelsford was just 17 in his senior season of track, and because of his young age, did not graduate until January 1939, giving him, in effect, a gap season before he started at Michigan. He won the Michigan AAU title that spring.

1940 – As a Wolverine frosh, he again captured the Michigan AAU crown, this time in 1:56.5.

World War II – Enlisted in the Air Force, where he learned to repair aircraft engines. He served in Italy and Morocco. In 1944, in an Allied military meet in Rome, he placed 2nd in the 800.

1946 – Competing for tiny Ohio Wesleyan, he placed 3rd in the NCAA mile in 4:16.1. In the fall, he won the NCAA cross country race on the final stretch, covering the 4M course at MSU in 20:22.9, a victory that surprised many.

1947 – Placed 5th in the NCAA mile. In the fall, he finished 3rd in the NCAA cross country nationals. He had been running in the lead when he went down on the slippery, snow-covered course in the final quarter mile. It was the only cross country defeat in his OWU career.

1948 – Won the Michigan AAU Indoor 2M in 9:34.4. Placed 3rd in the NCAA 5000 in 15:14.7. Attempted to make the Olympic team at 10,000, but blisters on both feet slowed him. In the 5000, he finished a disappointed 11th.

Brelsford went to work for Ford after his running years were over, spending much of his time in Latin America as a mechanical engineer. After retirement, he was a track official in the Orlando area.

At the age of 97, Brelsford did a long interview with Gary Cohen (<http://www.garycohenrunning.com/Interviews/Brelsford.aspx>).

Tia Brooks-Wannemacher – East Kentwood 2008



The 2008 D1 state champion in the shot with her 48-0.5 meet record, Brooks went on to compete at Nebraska. In 8 Big 12 meets, indoors and out, she won 5 conference titles and was 2nd three times. She was the NCAA runner-up indoors and out in 2011. In 2012, after winning both NCAA titles, she made the Olympic team by placing 3rd in the Trials. She finished 17th in the qualifying round in London. The next year, in her final campaign for the Huskers, she again won NCAA titles indoors and out. She took 2nd at the USATF Nationals and placed 6th in the World Championships in Moscow. In 2015, she finished 2nd at USATF and was 13th in the qualifying round at the Worlds in Beijing. In 2016, after throwing a lifetime best 64-8.75, she placed 4th at the Trials, missing her chance to return to the Olympics.

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.

Henry Carr - Detroit Northwestern High School 1961



Henry Carr was large and powerful even as a 9th-grader at Southwestern, when he weighed in at 200lb. He won the West Side titles in both the 100 and 220 that year. The next season he won his first City titles, before transferring to Northwestern.

As a senior, he clocked 9.5 for 100 yards (only 17 men in the world were faster). In the 220y, run on the straightaway as was typical back then, he went 20.6. In a wind-aided race in Detroit on May 18, 1961, he blistered a 20.0. He never went to the state finals, because from 1931-61, Detroit schools did not participate in MHSAA events. In all, Carr won 3 City titles at 100, 2 in the 220, and 2 in the long jump.

At Arizona State, Carr won 1963 NCAA title at 200m in 20.5. He took 2nd in the NCAA 100 that year though the photo later showed that he won. The same year he ran 20.69w to tie for the USA title. Twice he ran World Records: an unratified 20.4 for 200m, and a 20.3 for 220y three days later in a college three-way meet. He hit 45.4 for 400, becoming the No. 6 man ever.

In 1964, Carr ran even faster, hitting a WR 20.2 for 220y, but missing the NCAA with an injury. At the Final Olympic Trials, Carr was assured of an Olympic spot as long as he demonstrated fitness. He finished 4th and his selection to the team was controversial.

In Tokyo, Carr delivered by winning the gold in the 200 in 20.36, an Olympic Record. "I didn't think it was that fast," he said. "This was the easiest of my races." He came back to anchor the United States team to victory in the 4 x 400, his 44.5 anchor—the fastest of the race—finishing off a World Record 3:00.7 for the Americans.

During his career, he earned 3 *Track & Field News* World Rankings at 100, topped by a No. 3 in 1963. In '63 and '64, he ranked No. 1 in the world at 200. He also made the World Rankings at 400 (No. 5 in '63). He would go on to play three seasons in the NFL for the New York Giants.

Michael Johnson wasn't the first man who could sprint both the 200 and the 400 well. Many experts feel that, had the schedule allowed, Carr would have won gold in both events some 32 years before Johnson completed the historic double in Atlanta.

Carr died May 29, 2015, in Georgia.



Carr winning the Olympic 200.



Carr taking off on the anchor leg of the gold medal 4 x 400. He split 44.5 on a dirt track.

Rex Cawley – Farmington 1959



One of the greatest names in Michigan history named himself after the neighbor's dog. Warren Jay Cawley got to his 6th grade homeroom, and found three other Warrens. The teacher said that wasn't going to work. So Cawley took the name Rex and he made that name famous.

Coached by Gene Freed at Farmington, as a junior Cawley won state in the 120-yard highs (14-inches less than 110H) in 14.5, and also taking the 180-yard lows in a record 19.0.

The next year he trained hard, often running several events at a morning meet and finishing up with 3-4 more in the afternoon. His antics caused the MHSAA to change the limit from 4 events per meet to 4 per day. "I got real tough, real fast," he said. At regionals, he tied the national record with a 13.9 twice—director Bob Parks made sure there was a wind gauge. At the state finals on a wet cinder track, he won the long jump at 22-8 1/8, then the highs in 14.4, the lows in 19.2, and he brought Farmington back from a 12-yard deficit on the 880y relay, clocking 20.8 for the win.

Cawley traveled to Fort Wayne to run against the big boys, winning all three hurdle events: 14.1 (42-inch), 51.5 in the 440y intermediates, and 23.3 in the 220y lows. At the AAU nationals in Boulder, he became the first American man in history to place in all three, taking 5th in the highs, 6th in the 400H and 3rd in the 200 lows (22.8—the winning time was a World Record 22.6).

That put him on the national team, and he spent the summer in Europe, racing the world's best and setting more records. Not only was he T&FN high school athlete of the year, he ranked in the top 10 in the world in both the 110H and 400H.

At USC, despite a hamstring injury that slowed him for over a year, he won the 440H at the '63 NCAA (49.6 AR) just a few hours after taking 2nd in the quarter in 46.1.

In 1964, he won the Trials in a World Record 49.1. At the Olympic Games in Tokyo, he stunned, coming from behind to take gold in 49.69.

In 1965, he won nationals and ranked No. 1 in the world. Before pro track, long careers were hard. "I would love to compete in Mexico City," he said of the '68 Olympics, "but I've had my day and must consider my future."

He passed away on January 21, 2022, in Orange, California.



Cawley (far left) en route to winning the Olympic gold.

Ralph Craig – Detroit Central 1907



A hurdler at Central High, Ralph Craig didn't realize he could sprint until his University of Michigan coach, Keene Fitzpatrick, made him try. Good call. Two Olympic gold medals don't lie.

A solid hurdler in Central's powerhouse program, Craig won the 120-yard highs (college height) in 17.2 at the Michigan Interscholastic Championships his senior year. He added victories in the 220-yard lows (27.6) and the 4x2 (1:35.2).

He went on to star on the Michigan football team; he only got faster on the track. In 1910 he won the IC4A title for 220 yards—the de facto national college championship—in 21 1/5, tying the World Record (for a straight 220). The next year he did it again and added a win in the 100.

In the spring of 1912, the newly-graduated Craig announced that he would not try for an Olympic spot because he expected to be too busy in the world of business. Luckily, something changed his mind, and at the Eastern Trials for the Olympic team, he won the 200 and also earned a spot in his weaker event, the 100.

At the Games in Stockholm, Craig was not favored in the 100 because of his notoriously slow starts. However, favored Howard Drew got injured in the semifinals, and World Record holder Donald Lippincott was one of those worn out by 8 (!) false starts. Finally, the runners caught a fair start and Craig finished best to win the gold in 10.8 on the dirt track (these are the days before starting blocks, remember).

Five days later, heavily favored to win the 200, Craig did not disappoint, streaking to victory in 21.7. Surprisingly, he wasn't selected to run on the 4 x 100. The favored American team was disqualified after a bad handoff.

Craig was not done with the Olympics. A stunning 36 years later, he qualified for another Olympic team, this time in yachting. Though he was an alternate and did not compete, he did get the honor of being the flagbearer for Team USA. He was the second flagbearer from Detroit Central. The first, in 1908, was John Garrels.

For most of his working career, Craig was an administrator with the New York State Unemployment Bureau. He died in New York on July 21, 1972.

Candice Davis - Ann Arbor Pioneer 2003



A 3-time D1 champion in the 100 hurdles for Pioneer, she later competed for USC and was runner-up in the NCAA 100 hurdles in 2007. The next year as a pro, she won silver at the World Indoors and clocked a lifetime best 12.71. Competed in 3 Olympic Trials. Currently a high school coach in Southeast Michigan.

Geena Gall – Grand Blanc 2005



Geena Gall was a national champion and state record holder while at Grand Blanc High School. As a Michigan Wolverine under the coaching of Mike McGuire, she became one of the nation's finest, setting collegiate records and winning NCAA titles. She later made the 2012 Olympic team. Not a bad set of accomplishments for a longtime basketball player who had her eyes set on being a sprinter.

Career Highlights:

2003: After a torn ACL in basketball kept her from competing in track as a 9th-grader, she focused on the 400 as a sophomore and placed 6th in the D1 Finals (58.31). Her best 800 time was 2:15.6.

2004: Won the MITS Indoor 800 (2:13.64) and then captured the Nike Indoor 800 (2:12.20). Outdoors, she won the D1 800 (2:10.45) and placed 2nd at adidas Nationals (2:08.59). That fall, in her first year of running cross country, she faded from 20th on the final stretch at MIS to finish 42nd in D1.

2005: Won the MITS Indoor in 2:08.77 and also the Nike Indoor Nationals (2:10.62). Outdoors, she won the D1 Finals (2:09.60), the Midwest Meet (2:07.45), and the Nike Outdoor Nationals (2:05.05 state record). At 1600, she won her regional in 4:45.7 and then placed 2nd in D1 at 4:51.44.

2006: As a Wolverine frosh, she took 2nd in the Big 10 Indoor (2:09.76) then won the Big 10 outdoors in a PR 2:02.73. Placed 4th in the NCAA (2:04.35).

2007: Big 10 Indoor champion (2:06.22). Helped Michigan set Collegiate Records in the 4 x 800 (8:18.78) and 4 x 1500 (17:52.62) at the Penn Relays. Placed 3rd in Big 10 outdoor (2:06.89), 5th in NCAA (2:02.24 PR) and 6th at the USATF (2:02.31). At 1500, ran PR 4:19.45 for 6th at the Big 10.

2008: Big 10 Indoor champ (2:05.99), 4th at NCAA Indoor (2:05.79). Second in Big 10 outdoor (2:06.87). Won NCAA 800 (2:03.91), 7th in the Olympic Trials (2:02.35). Placed 3rd in Big 10 1500 (4:23.77).

2009: Won Big 10 Indoor (2:04.76) and placed 6th at NCAA Indoor (2:05.39). Outdoors, won Big 10 (2:04.06), Won NCAA 800 (2:00.80 PR). Placed 2nd at USATF (2:01.01) to make the national team. Ran PR 2:00.44 in Italy. At the World Champs in Berlin, finishing 6th in her semifinal (2:01.30).

2010: Injured in her first season as a pro, she ran a best of 2:02.16 and didn't make the USATF final.

2011: She broke 2:00 for the first time, running 1:59.76 at the Prefontaine Classic. She matched that time in placing 5th at USATF. She improved to 1:59.62 in Italy. At 1500, improved to 4:12.23.

2012: Ran PR 1:59.28 at Pre Classic. Second at the Olympic Trials in a PR 1:59.24. At the Olympic Games, she finished 7th in her semi (2:05.76), running with an injured calf muscle.

Talking to a local reporter in 2012, Gall said, "It's been a dream of mine to go to the Olympics since I saw the Olympics on TV. It's an amazing opportunity to represent your country and it was a huge, huge relief to make the team. I'm very happy all my hard work paid off. It's been an up and down path for me the past three years."

2013: Had a best of 2:00.53 and placed 8th at USATF. Improved her 1500 to 4:09.95.

2014: Helped the U.S. win gold at the World Relays Championships in the 4 x 800 (8:01.58 American Record). Season best of 2:01.10.

2015: Season best of 2:01.87.

2016: In her final season of competition at age 29, she ran 2:03.34 and competed in the heats of the Olympic Trials, a twisted ankle keeping her from more.

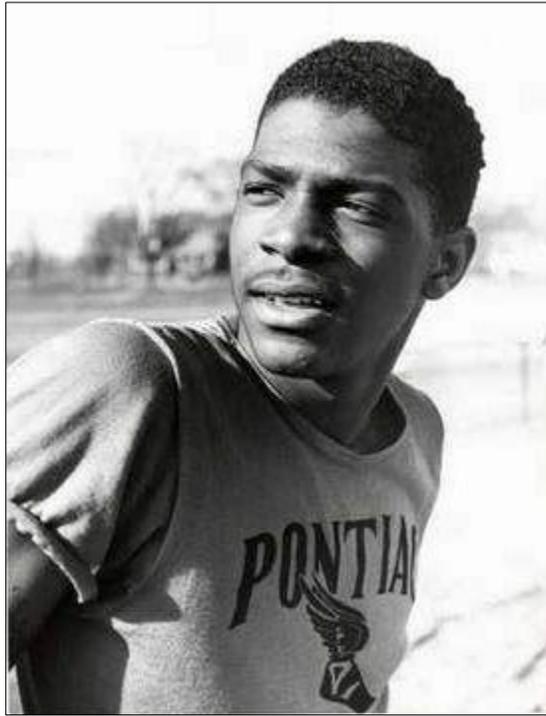
Gall's legacy is substantial. A state record that lasted 19 years. Two NCAA titles. All-America honors 10 times. The Olympics. She tells the story of her first-ever race at age 6, when she was so scared by the noise of the starting gun that she finished in tears. "It was frightening to me." Luckily, it only got better from there.

John Garrels – Detroit Central 1902



Garrels only won one state title in the early years of high school track in Michigan, capturing the 1902 discus throw at 101-10 (college weight implement). At the University of Michigan, he developed into one of the world's best throwers and hurdlers. He broke four World Records in the discus and hurdles, but was denied official recognition for them. A starter for three years on the Wolverine football team, he made the 1908 Olympics and won the silver medal in the 110 hurdles as well as the bronze in the shot put.

Hayes Jones – Pontiac Central 1956



Hayes Jones, even more than 50 years after winning the gold medal in the 110-meter hurdles in the Tokyo Olympics of 1964, remains the greatest high hurdler ever produced in the state of Michigan.

Born August 4, 1938, in Starkville, Mississippi, Jones won Class A state titles in the hurdles (1955-56) and the long jump (1956). In high school, he had best performances of 14.5 and 23-8.75.

At Eastern Michigan, he kept winning, capturing his first national title as a sophomore in 1958. The 5-11/168 Jones went on to capture four more USA titles outdoors, in addition to the 1959 NCAA crown. In the 1960 Rome Olympics, he won the bronze medal in the highs. Four years later, he came back for the gold medal, winning in an official 13.4 (FAT timed at 13.67). Indoors, however, was where Jones truly shone. From 1959 to 1964, he ran undefeated in 55 straight indoor hurdle races.

Reggie Jones - Saginaw 1973



At 6-3½, Reggie Jones seemed destined to be a basketball star. That was his primary sport at Arthur Eddy Junior High, though as a 9th grader in junior high track he would usually win the 60 and 100 and sometimes the shot put.

He moved up to Saginaw High as a sophomore, making waves with a 67-yard touchdown run against Arthur Hill in an otherwise disappointing 2-7 football season. In the winter, he played forward for the basketball team. In his first outdoor track meet, he impressed by winning the 800 in 2:06.5, the 100 in 10.0, the 220 in 23.5 and anchoring the winning 4x2 (1:34.6). At the end of his 10th grade season, he had bests of 10.0 and 22.1, placing 6th in the Class A 100 and 5th in the 220.

During football his junior year, he tore a ligament in his knee—it would be an injury that would come back to haunt him in the most important moment of his track career. That 11th grade season, he still ran on it, though it hurt. He won his first state titles, 9.8 in the 100 and 21.6 in the 220, as Saginaw finished 5 points behind Oak Park in the team standings.

As a senior, Jones rode the bench in basketball as the Trojans lost 66-60 to Detroit Southwestern in the Class A basketball finals. He was obviously ready to show he could perform. Two days later, he showed up at track practice for the first time all year. That was a Monday. On Wednesday he opened his season with a blazing 9.6 dual meet victory, legal wind.

When Coach Claude Marsh asked about his goals in life, Jones told him he wanted to be a truck driver. “Coach kept trying to talk to me about track and college.” In late April, he signed with Tennessee. Then he led Saginaw to its first state title in 24 years, winning the 100 in a meet record 9.6, the 220 in 21.1 and anchoring the winning 4x2. He then went to the International Prep Invitational in Prospect, Illinois, the forerunner of today’s high school national championship meets. He placed only 4th in the 220 at the, running 21.6. He did not make the top 5 in the 100.

Despite all his high school success, Jones stunned the world with how fast he developed in college. As a Tennessee frosh, he led the Vols to the 1974 NCAA title, winning the 100 in a wind-aided 9.18 (after a meet record 9.34 heat) and taking 2nd in the 220 in a wind-aided 20.0. He was named the outstanding athlete of the meet.

At the AAU Nationals, he placed 3rd in 10.1 as Steve Williams tied the World Record of 9.9. He followed up with a 3rd in the 200 in 20.7—he was the first American. Then, in the big U.S. versus the USSR meet, he won the 100 in the rain in 10.23 over Steve Williams, who held the World Record. The next day in the 200, he ran 20.81w to beat the Olympic champion, Valeriy Borzov. That season he ranked No. 4 in the world at 100 (No. 2 U.S.) and No. 5 at 200 (No. 1 U.S.).

At the 1975 NCAA, he placed 3rd in 9.44 as Eastern Michigan's Hasley Crawford, the next Olympic champion, won. He took the victory in the 220 in 20.60. At the AAU meet, he finished 3rd in 20.59 but was the first American. He would rank No. 6 in the world at 200 for the year (No. 3 U.S.), and No. 5 in the U.S. for the 100.

On July 26, 1975, Jones won the 100 at the Opportunities Industrialization Centers Relays (catchy name, huh?) in Boston. All three watches caught him in a World Record-tying 9.9, but the IAAF refused to ratify the record, saying the timing was suspect. A year later, the IAAF stopped ratifying hand-timed sprints altogether.

In the Olympic year, 1976, Jones was NCAA runner-up in 10.33 for 100 meters to Harvey Glange, who would be an Olympic medalist. He also ran on the winning 4 x 100. However, in the 200 semis, Jones pulled up and jogged in—the first public indication that his old football injury had come back to haunt him. “What’s wrong with Reggie Jones?” showed up as a discussion in Track & Field News.

The knee pain grew worse. In the Trials 100, he faded near the end to place 7th in 10.29. In the 200, he failed to make the finals. He ended up ranking No. 4 in the U.S., No. 10 in the world. Still good numbers, but he would never get to the Olympics. The cruel irony is that he surely would have made the Olympic podium if the Games had been held two years earlier, before his knee started to fail.

He had surgery in December to alleviate the pain that stemmed from the old injury. Doctors found much more damage than they expected, probably caused by running on it before it had healed correctly. He would miss the entire 1977 season.

In 1978 he tried to come back for a delayed senior year. He ran only 10.55 in the 100, and rather than being the No. 1 sprinter in the NCAA, he was No. 4 on the Volunteer squad. He said, “I feel good about starting over at the bottom and working my way up. I’ve had to do it just like people with no talent. I’m better for the experience. It would have been easier to quit. I could have said, ‘I can’t run anymore’ and that would have been it. I have my records. Those good times are on the books. What happened in ’74 is mine forever.

“Not knowing how bad my knee was helped. I thought it was just hurting. I didn’t want it to be an alibi, so I tried harder.”

Jones left the sport when he graduated from Tennessee. He missed the chance not just to represent the United States in the Olympics, but to go on the circuit and make money (yes, it was pre-professional track, but the top sprinters were all making bank). He missed the chance to compete in the World Championships, where he could have shined while still healthy—that meet wouldn’t be inaugurated till 1983. And quite likely, Jones would have been able to recover from that knee injury with modern sports medicine. In every sense, he was a victim of bad timing.

Jones later became a teacher and coach at Hillcrest High in Memphis, Tennessee. He made a practice of hardly ever mentioning his sports accomplishments. “I don’t talk about myself because that’s something Claude Marsh taught us. He not only trained us, he taught us about life and how it’s all about the children.”

He added, “Everybody has their time. I had mine. Sure, track runners today make millions... I might not have money to show for what I did back in the day, but I wouldn’t change a thing.”

Francie Kraker Goodridge – Ann Arbor 1965



It's kind of mind-boggling: a 14-year-old girl is spotted running fast in a physical fitness program in the fall and by the next summer, the local paper runs a feature on her with the headline, "Francie Kraker Dreams of Olympics." Up to that point, her best time was a 63.9 for the 440-yards. Looking at that from a modern perspective, it's hardly a notable time, let alone Olympic material.

Yet it was a different era in the early 60s, and opportunities for girls in most sports including track & field were almost non-existent. It was Betty Simmons, a PE teacher at Slauson Junior High in Ann Arbor, who spotted Kraker running 600 yards in under 2:00. Soon, her husband, Kenneth "Red" Simmons, was coaching Kraker and the couple was taking her to her first competitions as part of their new Michigammes track club.

"She asked me how I'd like to train for the Olympics, and I just thought it might be something interesting to do for a change," explained the young Kraker.

Said her coach, "She has a natural stride, which we have never tried to change, good speed, and intelligence. She never forgets her instructions and learns quickly."

Both of the Simmons should be credited with having a true eye for talent. Kraker blossomed as a runner, and was soon the best one-lapper on the Michigan scene for women. In 1963, during her sophomore year at Ann Arbor High (now Pioneer), she ran 61.9 to place 6th in the 440 at the women's indoor nationals in Columbus, Ohio. "I began thinking to myself, 'Hey, I can actually beat some of these people.'"

That July in Flint, she became the first Michigander to break 60 seconds in the 440 with her 59.8 (the yard distance is just 2.34m longer than the now-standard 400; usual conversion is 0.3).

In 1964, her junior year in high school, she failed to make the 440 finals at the AAU Indoor and ran the 880 instead, where she impressed by placing 2nd in 2:23.2. "The 880 field was weak—that's why I placed 2nd—but we decided then that the half-mile was my race." That summer at the AAU Nationals for girls, she won with a meet record 2:17.4.

During her senior year in high school, she started making bigger waves on the national scene. In June she made a breakthrough, winning the Central States AAU title in 2:13.6. She also ran her first 1500 in 5:02. After winning the 440, 800 and 1500 at the Michigan AAU Championships, she was named the association's outstanding woman.

As a frosh at the University of Michigan, there would be no track team to join, same as in high school. Kraker continued with the Michigammes, training with Coach Simmons. She opened up her indoor season in 1966 with a near-miss of the American Indoor Record for 880 (2:13.9). At

the Mason-Dixon Games a few weeks later, she broke it with a 2:12.8. Outdoors, she showed her speed and endurance had gotten better. She won the 440 and 1500 at the Central States meet in 56.9 & 4:43.0. She placed 3rd at AAU Nationals in 2:10.9 and days later won the AAU Junior title. By the end of the season she had dropped her 800 time to 2:05.9.

In 1967, she set an American Indoor Record with her 2:09.7 at the Boston Indoor, then broke the World Record for 600 yards with her 1:22.4 in New York. On track for another big outdoor season, she was derailed before Nationals with a hip injury. Then, still on the mend from that, she had an appendectomy. So much for the big buildup to the Olympics.

With the 1968 Olympics not until October, one didn't want to peak too soon. Kraker took 2nd in the AAU Indoor, but didn't start really cranking fast times until mid-summer. The Olympic Trials were in late August. In the final, she went out fast, leading for the first 600. She finished 4th in 2:07.2, saying, "I learned something from that race. I've got to even out my pace."

The 4th-place finish didn't rule her out of the Olympics. Because of the Games being staged in the high altitude of Mexico City, the AAU Women's Committee decided to stage a high-altitude camp in Los Alamos, New Mexico, and select the team based on how athletes did there. Before she went, Kraker ran 2:05.3 in Canada, getting under the Olympic standard of 2:06.0. That helped. It also helped that at an intersquad meet in Los Alamos she ran 2:07.0 and beat Madeline Manning, the eventual gold medalist. She was named to the team.

In Mexico City, she drew the toughest of the heats, running 2:07.3 but finishing 5th and missing out on the final. It wouldn't be her last trip to the Olympics.

The next few years brought many changes: a move to New England, marriage, new coaching. She also committed to a new primary event, the 1500. The Munich 1972 Games would be the first Olympics to let women run that far. At the Olympic Trials she placed 2nd in 4:15.2, behind the American Record of 4:10.4 that Francie Larrieu set.

At Munich, she qualified out of the first round with her 4:14.73. The semis had been scheduled for the next day, but the terrorist attack on the Israeli team changed everything. Kraker wrote about it in a diary of the Games that she published in the Ann Arbor News: "It is a day of terrible shock, the malignance of violence spreading to even here."

After seeing Russian Lyudmila Bragina run a World Record in the first round, Kraker knew that making it out of the semi would be very tough. "To qualify for the final I will have to run so much faster than I ever planned that to see those times clicking off will only scare me, each lap faster than I have ever paced a 1500 before...The astounding thought is that these women have ALL run three or more seconds faster than I have ever run."

The semi went out slowly, 2:17 at the 800. Then they kicked, and she struggled but still ran a bittersweet lifetime best. "The time I run here, 4:12.8, was ranked sixth in the world last year, but gets me nowhere here." The automatic timing had it 4:12.76, a PR and the second-fastest time ever by an American, but she finished 8th, more than 4 seconds out of qualifying for the final. Even an American Record would not have made it.

Still dealing with the trauma of the massacre, Kraker left Munich before the closing ceremonies, explaining, "We have shared too much sadness, too much confusion and bitterness. It is best to leave our ideals intact, and not go through the motions here."

Francie Kraker Goodridge, our first Olympian, went on to a successful career in coaching and sports administration. She followed her first coach, "Red" Simmons, as the head of the Michigan women's program, and later coached at Wake Forest. She has been honored with inductions into the University of Michigan Women's Track Hall of Fame, as well as the statewide Michigan Women's Hall of Fame.

She told the Ann Arbor News, "I just followed the desire to accomplish something and the outlet for that ended up being sports, which were just beginning for women in the '60s. I was 13, 14, looking for something that would make me special. There weren't many outlets for girls in those days. And then this opportunity to become an athlete came along and that was the beginning of a long career."

Deby Lansky LaPlante – Taylor Center 1971



One of the best female athletes to emerge from the club system prior to the MHSAA sponsorship of girls track, Lansky placed 4th in 60-yard hurdles at the (senior) indoor nationals during her senior year. The previous year she had set the meet record in the 80-yard hurdles at the AAU Junior Olympics. She went on to become one of the nation's best, twice winning national titles indoors and twice outdoors. Her greatest moment came when she won the 1979 nationals in an American Record 12.86.

Lisa Larsen – Battle Creek Central 1979



In high school, Lisa Larsen was a star swimmer, good enough to earn a scholarship to Michigan. She also ran track, placing 5th in the Class A mile in 5:07.2.

At Michigan she concentrated on swimming first, scoring 81 points in the Big 10 Championships as a frosh. She qualified for the Olympic Trials, but when the U.S. boycotted the Moscow Games, she took the summer off. "I started to gain weight, and I used running as a form of fitness to get back in shape to start my sophomore year at Michigan. And I found that I really loved running. My roommate was on the track team, and she goes, 'Oh my God, you can run.' Flash forward: I ended up turning in my scholarship as a swimmer and walking on as a runner."

Twice an All-American in cross country, she finished 6th in the 1983 NCAA 10,000. "My college coach, Ron Warhurst, was amazing. The biggest thing he taught me was how to hurt... and how to like it." At the 1984 Olympic Trials Marathon, she finished a heart-breaking 4th in 2:33:10, missing the Olympics by 44 seconds.

The next year, running under the last name Weidenbach, she won the Boston Marathon in 2:34:06; not until 2018 did another American woman win the race.

Four years later, she seemed poised for the Olympic team, but her lifetime best 2:31:06 in Pittsburgh gave her yet another 4th place. "I guess I won't be disappointed until I see the three women running in Seoul. The nightmare will become a reality at that point," she said. That summer, she tried to make the 10,000 team and finished 5th in 32:15.88.

She came back with a vengeance, winning Chicago that fall in 2:29:17. The next year, she won again in 2:28:15.

Then came another Olympic Trials, 1992. Short on training because of a plantar injury, she ran to—unbelievably—another 4th-place finish. "I had a love-hate relationship with the Olympic Trials," she has said.

Despite the Olympic frustrations, she enjoyed a career filled with major wins. She transitioned to the triathlon toward the end of her pro career. As Lisa Rainsberger, she currently coaches and is the mother of former Washington star Katie Rainsberger.

John McLean – Menominee 1897



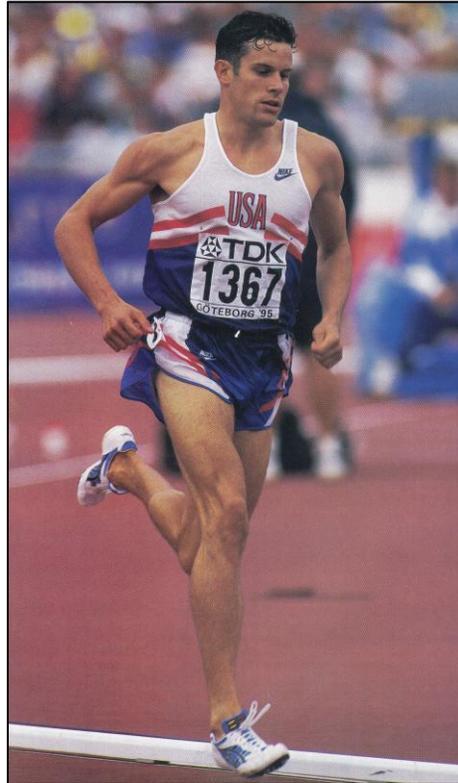
The first track & field Olympian from Michigan hailed from the Upper Peninsula town of Menominee. John Frederick McLean was perhaps better known as a football player, being an All-American in 1899 for the University of Michigan. In his final game for the Wolverines, he scored on a 40-yard run against Wisconsin.

On the track that spring he had set UM records in the 120-yard hurdles and the long jump.

In the 1900 Olympics in Paris, McLean competed in four events: the 110 hurdles (silver medal in 15.5), the long jump (6th place at 21-1.25), the triple jump and standing triple jump.

McLean was born in Canada on January 10, 1878. After the Olympics he became a football coach, leading the programs at Knox College and the University of Missouri. However, he was fired from Missouri in 1906 for his part in a scandal involving payments to an athlete. He died on June 4, 1955, and is buried in Menominee.

Paul McMullen – Cadillac 1990



Paul McMullen wasn't a superstar while at Cadillac High School. He only won a single state title, in the 1990 Class B 1600 at 4:19.9. To put that in perspective, in the 30+ years since then, the race has never gone that slow. He didn't run cross country at Cadillac, explaining, "In high school, you want to be separate from the runners, because you think they're wimpy. I was a football man. I didn't want to be recognized as a runner."

Yet the 1600 captured his imagination. He told his coach he wanted to do it as a 9th-grader, but his knees hurt too much because of growing pains. It wasn't until his junior year that he started going 4 laps, hitting 4:36. The only recruiter who saw the potential in him was Eastern Michigan's Bob Parks. After a redshirt first year, the 6-2/175 McMullen started producing for the Hurons, winning the Central Collegiates. As a sophomore he ran 3:40.96 and made All-American. The next year he placed 4th at NCAAs. His senior year, 1995, he placed 2nd to Kevin Sullivan in a memorable showdown.

That was the year McMullen broke out on the world stage. Under Parks' guidance, he won the USATF nationals, edging East Kentwood alum Brian Hyde at the line as both ran 3:43.90. At the World Championships in Sweden, he made the final and placed 10th in a PR 3:38.23. He slashed that down to 3:35.87 at Zürich, then 3:34.45 in Cologne.

In 1996, we wrote about his first Worlds, and the account tells much about what kind of racer he was:

In McMullen's first international championship race ever, the heats of the 1500, the young American found himself a well-back 9th with 200m left. Only the top 5 would advance to the semifinal. McMullen charged around the turn and came up fast behind the one-time World Champion. Bile saw him coming and whacked him across the chest with his arm. "He

hit me real, real hard. Hard enough to where if I were 50 pounds lighter, I would have been on my back.”

Instead, the determined 23-year-old didn't lose a stride. He passed several more runners and got the final qualifying spot. Bile didn't make it. The semis gave fans another opportunity to watch the rookie, fresh out of Eastern Michigan, show what he was made of. With 500m left, just as he was beginning his charge from the back of the pack, two runners fell in front of him. McMullen got tangled in the knot of legs and went down also. He jumped up and blazed his last lap in 52 seconds-plus. He again earned the last qualifying spot and was the only American to make the final. The two others who fell came home last.

In the World Championships final, McMullen ran aggressively. “My goal going in there was not to just sit and kick at the end. I said, ‘I'm going to the front of the darn thing and I'm going to slow it down.’ I wanted to put the brakes on it. Well, you got 45,000 people cheering for you and it's pretty damn hard to slow it down.” McMullen led to nearly 800m and was in good position with a lap to go, but he got cut off by eventual bronze winner Vénuste Niyongabo of Burundi, and then spiked on the last lap. He ended up 10th.

“I learned a lot,” he says of the experience. “I'm glad I had to go through that.”

The next season was his first year as a pro and he won the Olympic Trials in 3:43.86, his winning margin just 0.02 as he showed just how dangerous he could be in a kicker's race (800 went by in 2:06.42). At the Olympics, he got stuck in his semi and missed the final. *Track & Field News* ranked him as the top U.S. performer at 1500/mile.

In 1997, after a 3:58.61 mile indoors, he experienced the freak injury that would present his biggest challenge. Mowing the grass on a hillside, he slipped and caught his foot under the blades, severing most of two toes. The comeback proved to be extraordinarily difficult, since he had to adapt to a new footstrike and stride.

The next year, he was again a force, winning the USATF Indoor mile in 3:55.84 and 3rd in the nationals 1500. He ran the mile distance 8 times, each of them under 4:00. Both 1999 and 2000 did not live up to his expectations, and he didn't get a chance to make a second Olympic team, finishing 10th in his Olympic Trials preliminary heat.

In 2001 he came roaring back, again earning honors as the top U.S. 1500 runner of the year. He placed 3rd at nationals, then ran a lifetime best 3:33.89 in Monaco. At the World Championships he placed 10th. Along the way he clocked his fastest mile ever, 3:54.94 in London. His 800 PR, 1:45.71, came in his last race of the season, in Berlin.

The 2004 season would be his final one at a high level. He clocked a best of 3:39.52 as well as a 3:58.60 mile, but did not better than 10th in the Olympic Trials semis.

Afterward, he was a familiar and friendly face on the Michigan running season, finding special joy in coaching youth with his Chariots of Fire club.

In March 2021, McMullen tragically died at age 49 in a skiing accident.

Loren Murchison – Detroit Eastern 1916



At age 15 he won the Detroit schools “decathlon”, competing the next year for Eastern High. Then he moved to Missouri where he developed into a top sprinter. He made three Olympic sprint finals and won gold on the U.S. 4 x 100 in both 1920 and 1924. At age 27 he was struck with meningitis and spent the rest of his life in a wheelchair.

Penny Neer – North Adams 1978



(photo courtesy of Bentley Historical Library)

In 1978, Neer won the Class D shot and discus for tiny North Adams High. She came to Michigan on a basketball scholarship and played softball in addition to throwing for the Wolverines. She won three Big 10 discus titles, and was the first Michigan track woman to make All-America status. She won the 1982 AIAW title. In 1985 she threw her career best 201-4. She made the 1992 Olympic team, finishing 24th in qualifying in Barcelona. Track & Field News ranked her among the U.S. top 10 for 11 years straight from 1982-92.

Frank Nelson – Detroit University 1905



As an athlete on the powerful University High squad, Nelson never won a state title. His senior year, his parents sent him to an East Coast prep school, the Lawrenceville School in New Jersey. He continued his pole vaulting at Yale. In 1912 he was a last-minute replacement on Team USA for Paul Maxon, another former DUS athlete. In Stockholm he won the silver medal in the pole vault. He also played baseball in the Olympics (a demonstration sport)—but he played on the Swedish team.

Tiffany Ofili Porter – Ypsilanti 2005



When the eldest of the Ofili sisters first dabbled in track as an Ypsilanti elementary student, people spotted her speed, but few suspected she would eventually become a 7-time state champion, a 5-time NCAA champion and a 3-time Olympian.

As a middle schooler, Tiffany Ofili met Tom “Mick” Micallef, the Ypsilanti head coach who encouraged her to join his Ypsilanti Area Women’s Track Club. That set her up for future success.

As she has written, “Then 8th grade year my family and I moved to a new house, which meant I had the option to continue our relationship at the local high school, or at Ypsi High. I chose the latter. This decision proved fruitful because I was able to meet Coach Chris Jonik and under his and Mick’s guidance I was introduced to the hurdles.”

Career highlights:

2001 (8th grade): 6th in MITS 60 (8.09).

2002 (9th grade): 3rd in MITS 60 (7.95), 8th in long jump (16-10.5). At the outdoor D2 finals, she hurdled 44.04 to win the 300H, placed 4th in the 100 (12.57) and 2nd in the 100H (14.70).

2003 (10th grade): 3rd in MITS 60H (9.19), 6th in long jump (16-6.25). At the D2 finals, she placed 2nd in the 100 (12.29), 4th in the 100H (14.59) and ran second leg on the Ypsilanti 4x1 that won in 49.59.

2004 (11th grade): 2nd in both the MITS 60H (8.90) and long jump (16-6), At the D2 finals, in leading Ypsilanti to the team championship, she placed 2nd in the long jump (16-8.5), then 2nd in the 100 (12.74) before winning both hurdle finals in 14.34/44.78.

2005 (12th grade): Won the MITS 60H (8.61 PR) and long jump (18-4.25 PR). She also placed 3rd at Nike Indoor Nationals (8.71). Outdoors, she won the D2 long jump (18-9.25 PR), finished 2nd in the 100 (12.50), and captured both hurdles (14.19 PR/42.82 PR), winding up her career with 7 MHSAA titles (along with 5 runner-up honors).

Those high school accolades led to a full ride at the University of Michigan, where she worked with James Henry and Arnett Chisholm. She blossomed, winning 9 Big 10 titles and 5 NCAA crowns, and helped lead the Wolverines to a pair of conference titles.

2006: 2nd in Big 10 Indoor 60H. Big 10 champion in 100H (13.37 PR). Won USATF U20 title (13.15w), then captured World Junior bronze in 13.37 =PR.

2007: Big 10 Indoor champion in 60H (8.10), 4th in 60 (7.50), 2nd in long jump (20-3). Outdoors, won Big 10 (13.14), 3rd in 100 (11.71 PR). NCAA champion in PR 12.80.

2008: Big 10 Indoor—1st in 60H (8.06), 1st in long jump (20-6.5), 2nd in 60 (7.42 PR), 4th in 200 (24.62). NCAA Indoor 60H champ (7.94 PR). Big 10 Outdoor—2nd in 100H (12.92w), 3rd in long jump (20-11.25w), 4th in 100 (11.63w). NCAA champion in 12.84.

2009: Big 10 Indoor—1st in 60H (8.18), 2nd in long jump (20-7.25), 2nd in 60 (7.46), 4th in 200 (24.42). NCAA Indoor champion 60H (8.00). Big 10 Outdoor—1st in 100H (13.05w), 1st in long jump (21-3.25 PR), 2nd in 100 (11.70). NCAA Outdoor 100H champion (12.96). 4th in USATF Champs (12.66w).

2010: A dual citizen since birth, she felt herself drawn to represent her mother's home country, Great Britain. She was granted British eligibility at the end of the 2010 season, her first full season as a pro. It was also the first season she focused completely on the hurdles. Indoors, she had placed 4th at USATF Indoors (7.96), outdoors, she was 5th at the USATF meet (13.04).

2011: She took 2nd in the 60H at the European Indoors in 7.80 PR; outdoors, she placed 4th in the World Championships after running a PR 12.56 in the semis. Another major event happened this year, her marriage to fellow Wolverine Jeff Porter, an NCAA Indoor hurdle champion himself who would become a 2-time Olympian for the United States.

2012: Silver at the World Indoors (7.94) gave her a first medal for Britain. Outdoors, she was 2nd in the British champs and made it to the semis at the Olympics.

2013: British champion (12.68). Bronze at World Championships (12.55 PR).

2014: Bronze in World Indoor (7.86). British champion (12.85), European champion (12.76). Lifetime best 12.51 in Marrakech.

2015: British champion (12.83), 5th in World Champs (12.68).

2016: Bronze in World Indoor (7.90). British champion (12.91), European bronze (12.76), 7th in Olympics (12.76).

2017: Injury troubles, but still managed a 12.75 and ran in the heats of the World Championships.

2018: In a shortened season, finished 6th in the Commonwealth Games.

2020: A best of 12.90 in the pandemic year.

2021: Running as a mother in her final year of competition, coached by husband Jeff Porter, she won Euro Indoor bronze. She was British champion (12.78), and made it to the semis of the Olympics. "That feat was the culmination of countless hours of work, sacrifice, dedication, perseverance, and heart. Attending the Tokyo Olympic Games, this time knowing my child was watching, is a moment that I will never forget."

As she said in her retirement message, "As I officially close the chapter on our nearly three-decade long relationship, I want to thank you track and field, for all you gave me, and allowed me to experience. I learned so many lifelong lessons, met so many incredible people, visited so many fascinating countries, and earned a decent amount of cash along the way. You will always be my first love, and I will forever be indebted to you."

Tiffany Porter publishes a blog about being a parent and so many other things, including, of course, track & field. You can find it at <https://tiffoli.com/blog/>.

John Owen Jr. - Detroit 1879



In the years before high school sports, the prime mover of track & field in Detroit was the Detroit Athletic Club and its coach, Mike Murphy. His most famous athlete was John Owen Jr., the world's fastest man.

The first day he saw Owen, Murphy wasn't impressed. For starters, Owen was far older than the other athletes. And he was hardly an athletic specimen. Recalled Murphy, "He was about five feet, seven inches and only 128 pounds. He had never worn a running shoe and furthermore admitted he was 29. I laughed when they told me this fellow had any speed."

In April 1889 Owen won the 100-yard dash at the DAC Games in 10.6. In June at the Western AAU, he was beaten in the 100, 220 and 440 by Chicago star Luther Carey. Then he started winning. At an August race in Detroit reportedly broke 10 seconds in the 100, faster than the World Record, but the mark was wind-aided.

In 1890, he ran 10.4 and 23.6 in the short sprints in New York. On October 11, at the AAU National Championships in Washington, D.C., he made history. Facing the nation's best, Owen got out to a quick lead but the rest of the field soon pulled even. Then he put on his trademark finishing speed and crossed the line two feet ahead. Six timers caught him in 9.8, a new World Record.

Baltimore Sun: "The 100-yard record had been an iron-clad one for so long that its destruction was hardly anticipated except by John Owen's most intimate friends, who had accompanied him from Detroit to see him accomplish the feat."

Detroit Free Press: "Such a hustling of feet has never been seen."

Owen was the first man to break the 10-second barrier and his record lasted for 31 years. His coach, Mike Murphy, said that if he had been able to train Owen from age 18, he would have set World Records in the 100, 220 and 440 that would last for decades.

Owen retired after his record. Born into wealth (he apparently attended the elementary school named for his father), he soon went into the world of business. Among his other ventures, he came up with the concept of Indian Village, one of Detroit's most exclusive neighborhoods. He died on August 25, 1924 after a horseback riding accident; he was 63.

J. Neil “Pinky” Patterson – Detroit University School 1906



A 3-time state high jump champion whose school record still stands, J. Neil Patterson won the Penn Relays as well as the U.S. national title while still in high school,

Born July 27, 1885, Patterson (he went by “J. Neil”) became known as “Pinky” during his 9th grade year at Detroit University School (now Grosse Pointe University-Liggett). The nickname came from a case of scarlet fever he endured that year, one that kept him out of school for much of the year. That delay in his schooling was part of the reason that in 1906, he was a 20-year-old senior.

A gifted athlete, he could hurdle well (16.1 over the 42-inch barriers), but his specialty was the high jump. In 1902 he placed 2nd in the state meet as a 9th grader. The next year, scarlet fever kept him out of school entirely—in effect, he redshirted the entire year. Then the next three years he won it. As a senior, he set a meet record of 6-1.25. He also was the Penn Relays champion that year (the only high schooler competing in the special events, or open, category). He wrapped up the summer season by winning the AAU National title over the best collegian and open jumpers in the country.

That put Patterson on the fast track to the Olympics. He competed for the University of Michigan and the Chicago Athletic Association. In 1908, he won the Central Olympic Trials. He would be the youngest member of the U.S. Olympic team that year. In London, he would clear 6-0 and finish 7th on an “off day”. No record can be found of him participating in athletics after that point.

An automobile enthusiast, he is thought to be the first person to drive the entire transcontinental Lincoln Highway in 1913., He carried a jug of water from the Pacific Ocean and dumped it into the Atlantic when he finally arrived in New York City.

In World War I, he was a captain in the Signal Corps, and by the end of the war was stationed in Detroit to oversee the entire production of war planes. Afterward, he made his living in real estate in the Los Angeles area. That’s where he died at age 63, on December 20, 1948.

William Porter – Jackson 1942



In 1941, Jackson High had a pretty decent track program. Under coach Fred Janke (no relation, as far as I can tell, to later Viking coach Charlie Janke), the Vikings finished 3rd in the old 5-A League, and they had a state mile champion in Jay Woolsey (father to current Lumen Christi head Mike).

If Janke had a good eye for recruiting talent in the halls, would he have even noticed William Porter? He did no sports, and he didn't cut an athletic figure (later on, puberty sent his height skyrocketing to 6-3). The only picture we have of Porter from those days is of a small fellow slumped in his chair during a student council photo.

After his sophomore year at Jackson, Porter's parents (his dad was a doctor) decided to send him to an exclusive East Coast prep school, the Hill School in Pottstown, Pennsylvania. There he had to finally try a sport, as the school rules required it. First he tried baseball, but he got cut. So he had to join the track team. He showed up in the newspapers for the first time with a 1943 dual meet win in the 220-yard low hurdles in 26.8.

His senior year he found some success, winning the 60-yard dash in at the AAU Interscholastic Championships (yes, there was a high school indoor nationals back then) in 6.4, 2nd in the high hurdles, and 4th in the long jump with a 19-4.75 effort. He was voted the best athlete of the meet and given a watch.

Porter opted to head back home for college and started out at Western Michigan. As a freshman in 1945, he immediately became a winner for the Broncos, taking three events in an indoor contest against Notre Dame. Outdoors he again hit the Irish hard, winning the 100 yards in 9.9, the highs in 15.5 and the 220 lows in 25.0. At the NCAA Championships, he placed 3rd in the high hurdles and 5th in the lows.

Despite his success in Kalamazoo, Porter transferred to Northwestern for the rest of his college career. At the next Big 10 meet, he placed 2nd in the lows and 3rd in the highs.

In 1947, he placed 2nd to Harrison Dillard at the NCAA meet in both the highs and the lows (22.5). At the end of the year, a new publication called Track & Field News put out its first set of World Rankings, and named Porter No. 2 in his event.

1948 saw Porter 2nd in the NCAA's again, this time to Arkansas's Clyde Scott in a windy 13.8. Then in July, Porter finally won his first major race, hurdling 14.1 to take the AAU title in an upset victory over Dillard, the World Record holder who had won 82 straight races. In the Olympic Trials the following week, the heavily-favored Dillard slammed into the second and fourth hurdles hard and stopped at the seventh barrier. That left Porter to streak to the win by two yards in 13.9.

From a newspaper report of the time: "Porter, the six-foot three-inch, 150-pound son of a Jackson, Mich., physician, comes closest to being the exception proving the rule [that a great hurdler must be a solid sprinter]. At Hill School, he was too slow for sprinting [the author didn't notice that he was a national 60 champ in high school].

"Young Porter gives veteran coach Frank Hill of Northwestern full credit for developing him into an Olympic winner. Hill saw that Porter would have to make up in form for whatever speed he lacked, so turned him into a picture hurdler. He placed frames on top of hurdles, and made the former Navy ensign jump through them without scraping his shins or bumping his head."

"The result was a diving technique, with both hands extended as he sailed over a barrier. The average hurdler extends only the left hand."

Prior to his two victories over Dillard, Porter had lost to him in all 11 of their races. Dillard, meanwhile, crafted his own legend, placing 3rd in the Trials 100 and then becoming the surprise gold medalist in the sprint. Four years later he would finally win Olympic hurdle gold.

At the London Olympics, Porter won his semi by equaling the Olympic record of 14.1. Then he took sole ownership of the record with his 13.9 win in the final, leading a sweep for Team USA in front of 75,000 fans in Wembley Stadium.

Porter told *Track & Field News*, "I got off fast and I thought I had the race won. Then I hit the third hurdle and by the time we reached the sixth hurdle I was two yards behind Craig [Dixon]. Right then I thought he had me beat, but he made a mistake over the eighth hurdle and I had him for keeps. Record or not, it was a sloppily-run race. I'm surprised it was that fast. My 14.1 semi-final somehow felt faster."

Said Dixon, who finished 3rd, "in the middle of the race, I was leading. I was feeling good and thought I had the race won. That was my big mistake. At the last hurdle I was a little high, and I just wasn't driving to the tape, and he passed me. It was the first photo finish of the Olympic Games."

Shortly after the Games, Porter won the hurdles in 14.0 in a dual meet between the United States and the British Empire. That was the last race of his career. At the age of 22, he retired from sports, telling reporters, "I have a wife and no job."

September 16, 1948 was declared Bill Porter Day in Jackson, and both the champion and coach Hill came to town to address his fans.

Porter went on to a career in the hospital supply business. He died in California on March 10, 2000, at age 73.

Dathan Ritzenhein – Rockford 2001



At Rockford, Ritzenhein made himself a prep legend, winning his first national title as a sophomore. He won two D1 crowns in the 1600 and three in the 3200. He set state records at 1600 (4:05.9), 3200 (8:41.10) and 5000 (13:44.70). He captured Foot Locker nationals twice. At Colorado he won the 2003 NCAA cross country race. He made Olympic teams in 2004 (10,000), 2008 (Marathon) and 2012 (10,000) and held the American Record for 5000 with his 12:56.27.

Ryan Shay – Central Lake 1997



Ryan Shay might have come from the tiny Class D school of Central Lake, but that didn't stop him in his quest to be the best. Coached by his father, Joe Shay, when he made himself a high school cross country legend, Shay went on to a great collegiate career at Notre Dame and later became one of America's top marathoners before his career ended in stunning tragedy.

His career, in yearly highlights:

1993: After the third meet of his 9th -grade year, he went undefeated in high school cross country. He became the first 9th -grade boy to win a Class D cross country title, taking the win in 17:48, albeit slower than the winner of the Class D team race (held separately in those days).

1994: In his first state track meet, the frosh was runner-up in the D 1600 (4:25.87) and 3200 (9:41.69). As a sophomore that fall, he took the Class D XC title in 16:34.

1995: He won his first D title on the track with his 1600 of 4:28.73. He also captured the 800 (2:00.88) and 3200 (9:44.76). On a snow-covered course that fall, he won his third-straight Class D title in 16:01.

1996: In track, he repeated his state wins at 1600 (4:22.00) and 3200 (9:47.98), skipping the 800 this time. That fall, in the first year the state finals were run at Michigan International Speedway, Shay ran faster through the snow flurries than even the big school athletes, taking a historic fourth win in 15:30, with a winning margin of over a minute.

1997: He closed out his high school career, taking the Class D 1600 in 4:17.13, and the 3200 in a meet record 9:25.68. In all, he won 11 state titles for Central Lake. As a Notre Dame frosh, he placed 68th in the NCAA cross country championships (30:58).

1998: In the spring he led the U.S. U20 team at the World XC champs, finishing 20th . His next NCAA cross country championships was less than spectacular; he finished 229th (34:16).

1999: Won the Big East Indoor 3000. Shay placed 7th in the NCAA 10,000 in 29:55.78. In the fall he won the Big East XC title, then made All-America in cross country, placing 12th at nationals (30:46).

2000: After an early-season PR of 28:50.73, he won Big East titles at 5000 and 10,000 and placed 7th in the NCAA again, this time in 30:54.65. He was 10th in the USATF 10,000 (28:51.74).

2001: Won the Big East Indoor 5000 (14:10.00), then was 9th in the NCAA Indoor (14:02.35). Captured the NCAA 10,000 title in 29:05.44, the first Notre Dame athlete to win an NCAA track title in 45 years. Also was 6th in the NCAA 5000 (13:52.45). Finished 6th in the NCAA cross country champs in 29:23 for 10K.

2002: Won the Big East Indoor 3000 (8:09.42) then placed 18th at the NCAA Indoor. Ran his 5000 PR of 13:35.08 in the early season at Mt. SAC. Runner-up in the NCAA track championships at 29:02.92, then placed 7th in the USATF race in 28:40.66. Ran his first marathon at Chicago, placing 15th in 2:14:30.

2003: The winner of the 2003 USA Running Circuit, he captured U.S. titles in the marathon (2:14:29) and half marathon (1:04:13), as well as placing 3rd in both the USATF 5K (14:06) and 25K (1:17:44). Competed in the World Championships marathon in Paris, but was unable to finish.

2004: Repeated as winner of the USA Running Circuit, with wins in the national championship half marathon (1:05:04) and 20K (59:53), 2nds in the 25K (1:17:12) and 5K (14:02) and a 3rd in the 10M (47:11). Finished 22nd in the Olympic Trials Marathon. Ran his PR marathon in New York City (2:14:08). Placed 10th in the Olympic Trials 10,000 (28:49.95).

2005: Finished 2nd in the USA Running Circuit standings, winning the USATF half-marathon title. Finished 15th in the World Half Marathon Champs (PR 1:03:13). PRed at 15K in Jacksonville (43:52). Placed 11th in the Boston Marathon (2:18:17) and 18th in New York (2:17:14).

2006: Placed 3rd in the USA 5K road champs in 13:58.2. Finished 3rd in the Twin Cities Marathon (2:14:58).

2007: Placed 14th at the USATF XC champs, then competed at the World XC in Kenya. PRed at 10K in 28:03.44 at Stanford in April, then ran 8th in the USATF 10,000 on the track in 28:54.34.

Shay's career came to a horrifying conclusion at the New York City Marathon on November 3, 2007. In a race that doubled as the U.S. Olympic Trials, Shay collapsed near the 5.5M mark and was pronounced dead shortly afterward, the victim of a cardiac arrhythmia, the result of a pre-existing enlarged heart. It happened on the same day as the MHSAA cross country finals at MIS; the shock as the news spread sapped the joy from that event.

Anytime someone dies too young, it leaves so many others grappling with grief. Ryan had been recently married to Alicia Craig, herself a notable runner. She has been open about her difficult journey since, as has the Shay family. His father, Joe, passed away in March 2024.

Ryan Shay is remembered through the Ryan Shay Mile in Charlevoix, as well as a memorial bench in New York's Central Park. But perhaps the best way to remember him is to run where he did. He told *Michigan Runner*, "One of my favorite places to run is in the Jordan Valley of Northern Michigan. The run is on very soft dirt trails or dirt roads along the fast-moving Jordan River. The color of the leaves in the fall are gorgeous and there is various wildlife to observe while hammering along the trails. But, best of all, it's just a few miles from my home."

Eddie Tolan – Detroit Cass Tech 1927



A legend at the high school level and beyond. Tolan won three straight 100/220 sprint doubles at the Class A state finals for Cass Tech. Made All-American 6 times for Michigan, placing 2nd in the 1931 NCAA 100, the year he won the NCAA 220. At the 1932 Olympic Games he won the 100/200 double and became the first Black American to be hailed as the “World’s Fastest Man.”

Kim Turner – Detroit Mumford 1979



“I learned that you have to take some beatings because I’ve lost a lot of races. And I’m still losing but I keep doing what I have to do,” said hurdler Kim Turner. That ability to keep getting back up and fighting is what made the Detroit Mumford/Motor City TC great an Olympic medalist.

Even as a senior at Mumford High, she knew big things were in her future. “The Olympics is my goal,” she told a reporter. “I think 1984 will be my year. I’m not quite ready yet.”

The Detroitier finished her high school career in 1979 with two state titles in the 100 hurdles and another on the 4x2 with her Mumford teammates. At the time, Michigan preps were running the low (30”) hurdles. At the AAU Junior Champs she got a chance to run the 33-inch college height and flew to a 13.83.

Turner signed with UTEP, where she flourished. In 1982, the first NCAA Championships for women, she placed 3rd. The next year, runner-up in a PR 12.95. And in 1984, she won the NCAA title. A few weeks later, she won the Olympic Trials in 13.12 in one of the tightest finishes ever. Places 2-3-4 all clocked 13.13.

At the Los Angeles Olympics, Turner tied for the bronze medal in 13.06. “I can’t believe it,” she said. “I guess somebody up there likes me after all.”

As a pro—competing under the last name McKenzie—she stayed in the sport through 1992, when she did the fastest running of her life, clocking 12.77 at the Mt. SAC Relays that year. Her best time indoors came at the World Indoor Championships in Budapest in 1989, a 7.92.

“Track & field is the thing that I was born to do,” she told a reporter in 1991. Yet she was unable to get back to the Olympic stage. In 1988, she just missed, placing 5th in the Trials. In 1992, before the Trials she said, “Is this my last hurrah? I don’t know. I’m certainly going to put everything I have into this effort, and then we’ll just have to see.” She finished 6th in her semifinal and did not advance.

Turner won a total of four USA titles in addition to her Olympic Trials victory. She was ranked among the top 10 American hurdlers of the year by *Track & Field News* a remarkable 10 times from 1981-1992. She later coached at Alabama A&M for 19 years.

Delisa Walton - Detroit Mackenzie 1979



(photo courtesy University of Tennessee)

When Delisa Walton's junior high PE teacher saw her beating all the boys in the class in races, he made a call to Richard Ford, the coach of the Motor City Track Club. Ford knew talent when he saw it.

He recalled, "The first time I saw her run, I called all the girls together and I told them, 'This is a superstar.' Some of the girls laughed, but that very day, with no training, Delisa ran one girl right into the ground... Who else could run two miles without training? Within three weeks they were calling her 'superstar.'"

At Detroit's Mackenzie High, Walton worked with coach Jan Chapman, who in interviews gave all the credit to Ford. She showed solid sprint skills, running 58.3y for 440y as a freshman and winning the state title in 57.0y the next year. However, Motor City TC coach Richard Ford urged her to take on the 800. Finally, in a December meet in Vermont, she tried her first one. "She hadn't trained for it," said Ford. "Well, she lost the race and she came up to me with tears in her eyes and said, 'I quit. I quit letting people beat me.'"

For the rest of that season, Walton went unbeaten, and at the State Finals she covered 880y in a national federation record 2:07.7y (worth 2:07.0 for 800m), and then set a meet record of 54.5y in the 440. As a senior, she was equally dominant, though her times weren't as fast: 55.5y and 2:11.5y. At one point she told an interviewer, "I'm not interested in guys right now because they all want me to quit track. But I can't because I can get a scholarship and do what I always wanted to do through track."

That plan panned out. The next fall, she started at the University of Tennessee on a full scholarship. As a frosh, she won the AIAW title (the forerunner of the NCAA for women), then

she went to the Olympic Trials (even though the U.S. would boycott the Moscow Games) and finished 4th in 2:01.93.

The next year she made AIAW runner-up, and in 1982 she won the first NCAA title and also captured the USA Nationals. A 3-time national champion indoors, at the first NCAA Women's Indoor Championships in 1983 she anchored Tennessee to a collegiate record in the mile relay.

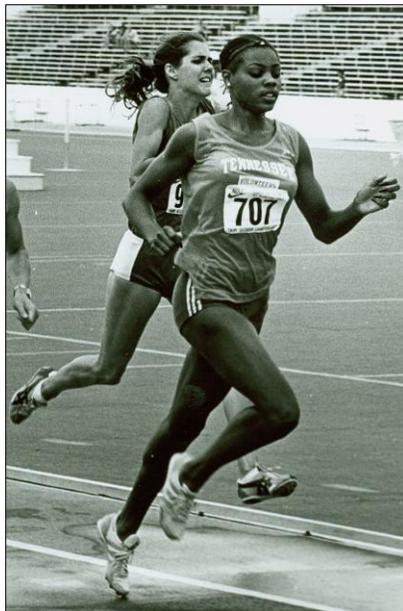
The 1983 outdoor season didn't happen for her, as she was now known as Delisa Walton-Floyd, having married world-class sprinter Stanley Floyd. She was expecting her first child. The next year her bid to make the next Olympic team fell short. She made the final, but only finished 7th.

In 1987, she ran a 400 PR of 51.21 and she broke 2:00 for the first time with her 1:59.80 at the Bruce Jenner Classic in San Jose. She took 2nd at nationals in 1:59.20 to make the World Championships. However, in Rome she didn't make it out of her semi. She still finished the year on a high note, with a PR 1:58.70 in Berlin.

In 1988, Walton-Floyd was all business. She finished 2nd in the Trials in 1:59.20. At the Olympic Games in Seoul, South Korea, she ran the race of her life, clocking a PR 1:57.80 in 5th. After the fall of the Berlin Wall the next year and the eventual crumbling of the East German government, it was revealed that both the gold and silver medalists from East Germany had been part of the nation's state-controlled doping program. If they had been disqualified, Delisa Walton-Floyd would rightfully have the bronze medal. However, the International Olympic Committee has refused to disqualify any of the many East German doped athletes who were revealed at the time.

She continued racing all the way through 2000, while juggling job and family. By the time she was done, *Track & Field News* had ranked her among the top 10 Americans at 800 for an amazing 10 out of 11 years straight. At 400, she was ranked 4 times. Her collegiate indoor record in the 600 (1:26.56) would last nearly 40 years until Athing Mu broke it in 2021. She still holds the Michigan HS alumni record at 800 and 12 of the 16 Michigan times under 2:00.

Delisa and Stanley Floyd live in Texas. Their daughter, Ebonie, was an All-American sprinter for Houston (PRs 11.13, 22.32, 51.10) and in 2013 won the USATF Indoor title at 400. Grandson Cayden Broadnax ran 10.39/10.28w as a Texas high schooler and is an All-Big 12 sprinter for Houston.



(photo courtesy University of Tennessee)

Willis Ward – Detroit Northwestern 1931



For many of our readers, it's safe to say that Willis Ward is the greatest athlete they've never heard of. In football circles, he's better known as one of the big stars of the Michigan Wolverine national championship teams in the early 1930s. In history circles, he's better remembered as a public servant and a judge.

His track & field legacy is what we are focused on here. He twice broke the national record in the high jump as an athlete at Northwestern High in Detroit, and also won state titles in the hurdles. As a freshman at Michigan in 1932, he was invited to be a guest competitor in the high jump at the NCAA finals, in order to qualify for the Olympic Trials. He ended up winning the competition, beating all of the collegians with a mark that made him No. 3 on the world list.

Ward was much more than a high jumper. He could sprint: his 9.6 PR for 100 yards made him No. 6 in the world in 1933, and he also tied the indoor dash World Record. He could hurdle: his 14.5 PR made him No. 15 in the world in 1935. And he could long jump: his PR of 25-1.5 in 1935 made him No. 8 in the world. He beat Jesse Owens twice that season—that same one that Owens made himself a legend by setting 4 World Records in 45 minutes in Ann Arbor.

Born in 1912 in Alabama, Ward attended high school at Northwestern, where he won three state titles—and was denied a chance at more when his senior year the Detroit schools stopped participating in MHSAA events. At Michigan, he won 8 Big 10 titles and was a 3-time All-American.

Some highlights along the way:

1928 – Placed 3rd in the Class A high jump as a 9th grader.

1929 – Won the Class A high jump with a state record 6-1.75 (No. 59 in the world that year). Made the finals of the Class A hurdles but did not place in the top 4.

1930 – Won the Metropolitan Champs indoors with a national HS record of 6-4 (No. 15 in world). Won Class A state title in 120y high hurdles in 16.0, and won the 220y lows in 26.1. Placed 2nd in the high jump.

1931 – Won the Metropolitan Champs indoors with a national record of 6-6 (No. 3 in the world). With Detroit schools decided not to compete in MHSAA events, he was unable to defend his state titles. He won the PSL hurdle title in 15.1 (No. 41 in world), and the high jump at 6-1.

1932 – Tied for the 65-yard high hurdle win at the Michigan AAU Indoor. Was invited to compete in the NCAA meet as a guest competitor, part of an Olympic try-out. After 2 weeks of training, he won the event at 6-7 1/8; it made him the No. 3 performer in the world that year. At the Final Olympic Trials at Stanford on July 16, he tied for 4th at 6-5 5/8, narrowly missing the Olympic team.

1933 – Indoors at the Butler Relays, Ward tied the 60-yard World Record with his 6.2. At the Big 10 Indoor, he won the 60 dash, 70-yard hurdles and high jump. His 6-5.5 indoors ranked him No.11 in the world. Ward scored 18 of Michigan's 60.5 points in winning the Big 10 outdoor meet. He captured the 100 and high jump and was 2nd in the 120 hurdles and the broad jump. His best 100 of 9.6 ranked him No. 6 in the world; his long jump of 24-1 ranked him No. 27.

1934 – Won the Big 10 long jump at 23-2.25. He hurdled 14.7 (No. 18 in the world). He high jumped 6-5 7/8 (No. 13 in world).

1935 – Beat Jesse Owens indoors in both the 60-yard dash and 65 hurdles. Won Big 10 high jump. Hurdled 14.5 (No. 15 in world). High jumped 6-3 5/8 (No. 55). Long jumped 25-1.5 (No. 8). In his first-ever decathlon he placed 4th at the AAU Nationals despite no-heighting the pole vault and not finishing the 1500; he scored 6539, making him No. 15 in the world. Unfortunately, he finished his senior year with a serious leg injury.

During the Olympic year, 1936, some felt that Ward, at 6-4/200lb, would have been a gold medal contender had he trained for the decathlon. Wrote track writer Maxwell Stiles at the time, "We only know what we think Ward can do, and that is become the greatest decathlon man of all time if he can learn to pole vault, to throw the discus and to hurl the javelin."

Ward told reporters in February that his priorities had changed, "Law school isn't like undergraduate work. It takes plenty of study, and I'm afraid the training necessary to go to the Olympics would hurt my standing for a degree. Anyway, I haven't done a tap of training, and I don't know about that leg." Asked if he might change his mind, he replied, "Frankly, I don't believe there's a chance I'll do that."

After the Olympics were over, he said he regretted not going after a chance to compete. He confessed later in life that he lost his competitive drive after being kept from playing in the Michigan-Georgia Tech football game in 1934 because Georgia Tech refused to play with a black man on the field. Michigan's coaches controversially sidelined Ward and won the game, 9-2.

Ward admitted that the experience convinced him that blacks would not be able to compete in the Nazi Olympics of 1936. "That Georgia Tech game killed me. I frankly felt they would not let black athletes compete. Having gone through the Tech experience, it seemed an easy thing for them to say, 'Well, we just won't run 'em if Hitler insists.'"

Ward graduated from the Detroit College of Law in 1939 and served in the Army in World War II. He later worked as a lawyer, a member of the Michigan Public Service Commission and a probate judge. Elected to the UM Hall of Honor in 1981, he passed away in 1983 and is buried at Detroit Memorial Park.

Herb Washington – Flint Central 1968



Who won? This is the finish of the 50-yard dash at the Milwaukee Journal Indoor on March 9, 1968. On the right is Charlie Greene, a 3-time NCAA 100 champion and 3-time winner of the NCAA Indoor 60. On the left is Herb Washington, a teenager from Flint. Many observers said that Washington won, or at least tied Greene.

Wrote Track & Field News: “For a change, right or wrong, Charlie Greene was awarded a decision in a close sprint finish at the first Milwaukee Journal Games since 1965. But the newsmaker was close runner-up Herb Washington, a 17-year-old senior of Central High in Flint, Mich., whose 5.1 clocking matched Greene’s as well as the world standard first set in 1939 for 50-yards. Washington, who became the fourth dashman to claim a piece of the record, did not especially surprise Midwest filberts for he had won the Junior Champ 100 title last summer in a wind-aided 9.4 and copped the Cleveland KC 50 in 5.3.”

The previous December, Washington, the No. 6 man on the Flint Central basketball team, announced he would leave the team to concentrate on track with coach Carl Krieger. The two retooled Washington’s start, and he won his first meet, running 6.3 in the 60 to defeat Tom Randolph (MAC recordholder in the 100) at the Western Michigan Relays on January 27.

On March 1 at the Cleveland K of C meet, Washington won the 50 in 5.3 (after a 5.3 semi), topping a strong collegiate field. Then came Milwaukee the next weekend, where the high school senior established his world class credentials.

On March 23, Washington finally got his moment. At the Hamilton Indoor Games in Ontario, the high schooler tied the World Record with a 5.1 in his semifinal, then came back to win the final in 5.2, beating Olympic 200 bronze medalist Ed Roberts.

As a high school phenom, Washington also had his share of success outdoors, winning the Class A sprint double at the state finals as both a junior and senior. His 9.8 for 100 yards in 1972

tied the meet record. Earlier that year he had set the state record 9.4 with a win at the Mansfield Relays, later tying it when he won the post-season Golden West Invitational in California. At the time, the Golden West was the closest thing at the time to a high school national championships; Washington placed 2nd in the 220 that day in 21.3.

Washington went on to fame at Michigan State, winning the NCAA dash title as well as All-America honors four times. He captured 7 Big 10 titles and broke World Indoor Records on several occasions. He later played two seasons in Major League Baseball as a “designated runner” for the Oakland As. He has since become a successful businessman.

Greene, his rival in Milwaukee, broke the 100 m World Record twice in the summer of 1972 and captured Olympic gold in a World Record 4 x 100.



Bill Watson – Saginaw 1935



(photo courtesy of the University of Michigan's Bentley Library)

The Olympics were cancelled in 1940 because of World War II—and Bill Watson lost his shot at the decathlon gold that everyone agreed would be his.

“Big Bill” Watson was discovered by the track world in 1933 in a PE class at Saginaw High School. With the bar set at 3-feet, the entire class had to jump. Remembered Chet Stackhouse, the teacher and track coach: “When Watson’s turn came he bounced over it with feet to spare. When I went home at noon I told my wife I had just seen an Olympic champion.”

Watson, who also played football and basketball for Saginaw, won 5 state track titles. As a junior it was the shot (48-10.25) and high jump (5-11). As a senior, he led the Trojans to the team trophy with wins in the shot (53-10 3/8, a state record by over a foot), long jump (22-4) and high jump (6-1.25).

At the University of Michigan, the 6-foot, 200lb Watson became the first African-American captain of any sport. In all, he won 12 Big 10 titles in events including the shot, long jump and discus, and won acclaim for his relay legs as well. At the NCAA level, he was runner-up in the long jump in 1938, runner-up in the shot and discus the next year. Altogether he was a 7-time All-American.

No athlete in the world had the range that Watson did. In 1939 he led the world in the long jump with his 25-5.5. He was second in in the shot at 54-6.5 and No. 13 in the discus at 163-6.

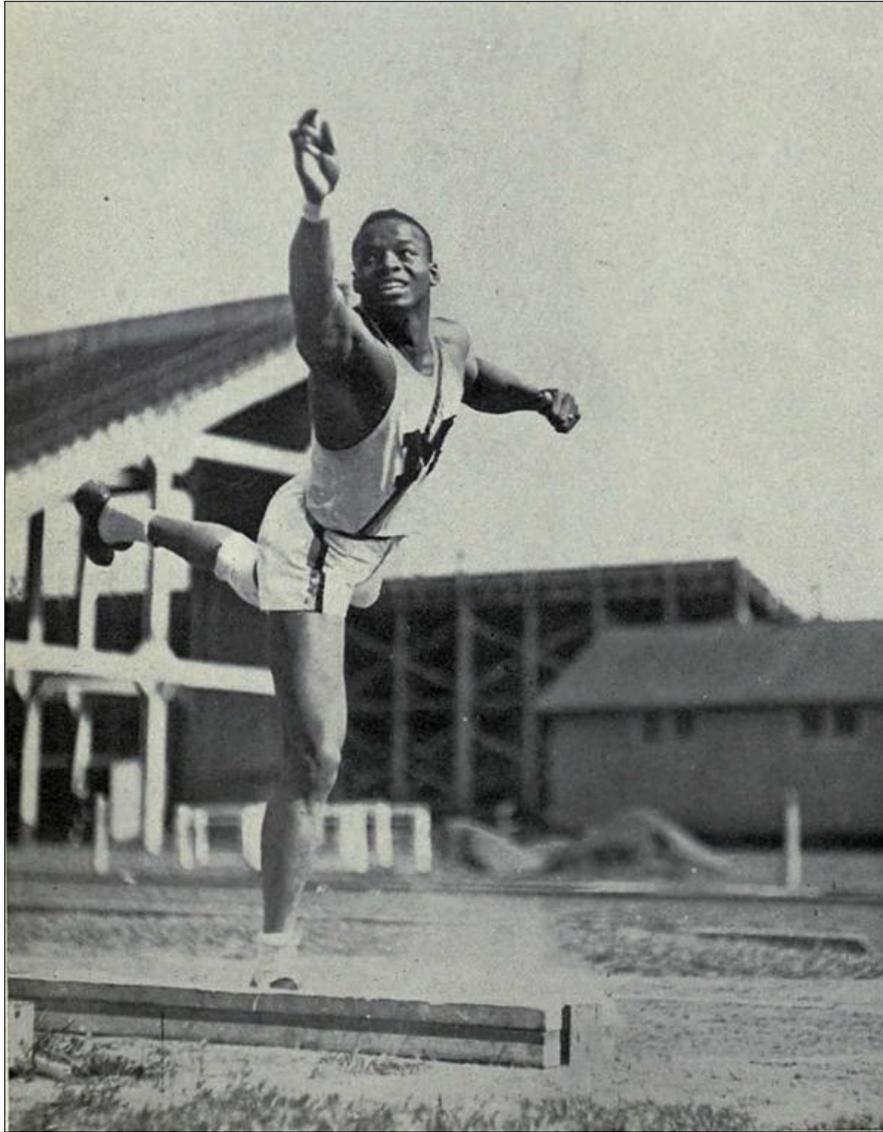
In the decathlon, his unique combination of strength and speed really shined. In his first-ever, he nearly broke the World Record after having the best first day in history. His score of 7523 on the tables of the time was the No. 4 score ever and led the world list by nearly 600 points.

He had been expected to break the World Record at the Olympics in Helsinki, but the Trials and Games were both cancelled because of World War II.

Wrote decathlon expert Frank Zarnowski, “Today there is no debate as to whether he would have, at age 23, been the Olympic decathlon favorite in 1940 in Helsinki. Likely, Bill Watson would have won easily. What track authorities do debate is whether he would have repeated the win in 1944.”

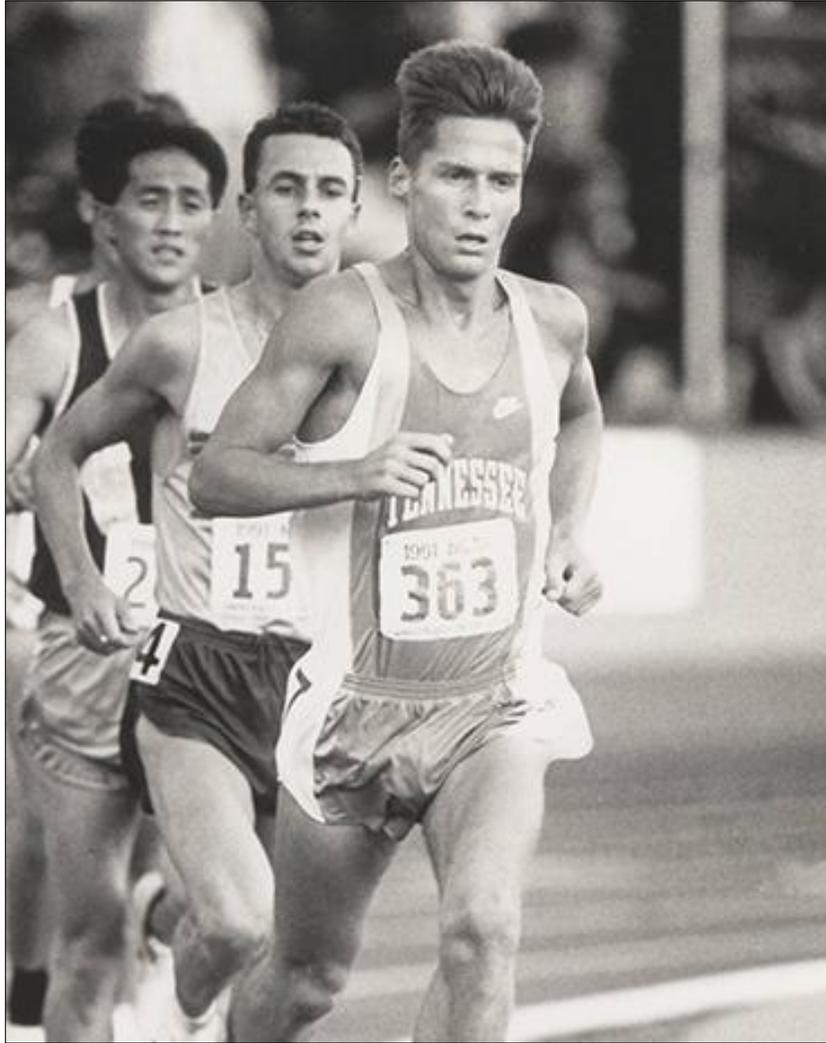
Watson later served as a Detroit police officer for 25 years, winning 8 meritorious service commendations. He retired at age 49. Seven years later, his life came to a horrifying and mystifying end. A week after a confrontation with police caused them to take away a gun of his,

he drove by police officers who were ticketing a motorist and demanded they stop. He then threatened them before opening fire. The officers, one white and one black, both returned fire. Watson, hit several times, died at the scene. He was 73. The articles at the time did not address whether he perhaps was suffering from mental illness or any other issues.



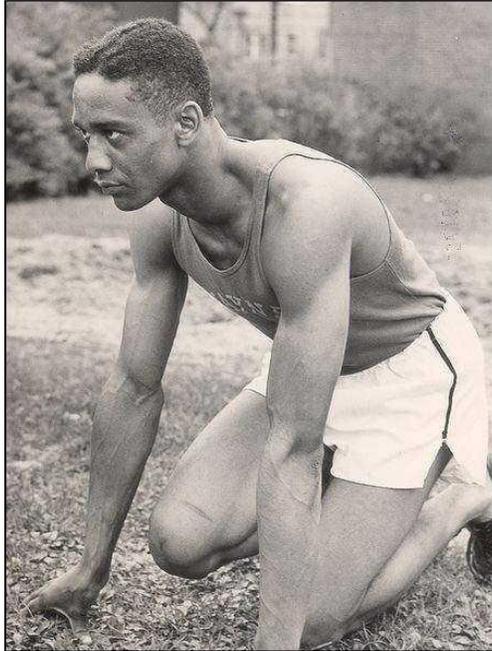
(photo courtesy of the University of Michigan's Bentley Library)

Todd Williams – Monroe 1987



Williams won the Class A 3200 in 1986 and '87, as well as two-straight cross country crowns. He finished 2nd at Foot Locker Nationals his senior year, and placed 23rd at the World U20 race in Poland the next spring. At Tennessee, he was a 3-time All-American. In 1991 he helped the Vols win the team title by placing 2nd in the 10,000 and coming back for 3rd in the 5000. He made the 10,000 Olympic team in 1992 and 1996, and competed at Worlds in 1993 (7th) and '95 (9th). He retired with PRs of 13:19.50, 27:31.34 and 2:11:17.

Lorenzo Wright – Detroit Miller 1944



He wasn't even the star of his high school team, yet four years later, Lorenzo Wright would be an Olympic gold medalist.

At Miller High, the city championship was the biggest meet Wright ever competed at. His senior year, he won the long jump in a modest 20-3.5 and led off the winning 4 x 220 relay. At the end of the season, he was the team's No. 3 scorer.

Wright went to Wayne State, where he blossomed into a star. In his final meet of the season, he won the 100, 220, both hurdle races, the long jump and anchored the winning 4x2. Four days later he joined the Army to fight in the final months of World War II.

Private First Class Wright returned after two years of service and picked up where he left off. He won 5 events at the 1947 conference meet and at the NCAA Championships sailed to 25-9.5 to finish 2nd in the long jump. It was the third-longest jump in the world that year.

The next winter, he won the U.S. indoor title at 25-3.75; he was only the second man ever to go past 25-feet indoors; the first was Jesse Owens. At the Olympic Trials he finished 3rd and was also named an alternate for the 4 x 100 relay.

In London, Wright finished a frustrated 4th in his specialty. But he was given a chance to run second leg in the relay, and his blistering backstretch helped the U.S. win. However, an official disqualified them, saying that the pass from Barney Ewell to Wright was out of zone. The U.S. protested—and after the podium ceremony giving the gold to Britain, the British judges relented when multiple photos showed the exchange was well within the zone. Wright and his teammates were given their gold medals on the boat ride home.

Though he won another U.S. Indoor title in 1952, Wright retired after failing to qualify for the Olympic Trials. He then took a coaching job at Miller High. To add insult to injury, the AAU called that a violation of his amateur status, and banned him for life. He coached successfully in Detroit for over 15 years and in 1969 was the first African-American named in charge of the city's high school sports programs. He was stabbed to death by his wife on March 27, 1972 at the age of 45 during a marital dispute.