

Former track star urges moving Moscow Olympics

By BARBARA UNDERWOOD
Former track star Susie Qualls made it to the Olympic trials in 1972 although she didn't qualify for the games. But the Detroit Country Day School teacher came close enough to know the excitement of the competition, and she doesn't want that taken away from athletes today.

Mrs. Qualls was asked recently how she feels about a possible boycott of the Olympics. "I am an American first and an athlete second, but I would hate to miss the Olympics for whatever reason," she said. "They are the epitome of athletics. You can go no higher."

If the site is moved from Moscow to

prevent a boycott, that would be "great," Mrs. Qualls said.

"THAT WOULD solve the problem, but I would hate for America to deny me a chance to represent my country. I would hate not to go. It is a one-shot deal."

She believes if America doesn't participate "it is not going to change things that much."
"It's like committing suicide to protest something," she said. "In a few months, the incident is forgotten."

"The Russians are in Afghanistan trying to get control of the oil fields. The United States' not going to the Olympics is not going to stop that. That won't stop Russia. War will stop Russia."

MRS. QUALLS' Olympic aspirations began when she was a fifth grader in Bedford Township and competed in a school track meet. The junior olympics in a summer recreation program followed.

She went on to compete in Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) track meets, winning first and second place in the long jump and shot put events.

She continued to take first and second place honors, mostly in the long jump, in meets in other states.

The summer before she entered seventh grade, Mrs. Qualls was diagnosed as having scoliosis, a spinal curvature that often affects youngsters as they go through the rapid growth years, she wore a back brace for three years to correct the condition.

"It never stopped me," she said. "The doctor said I could do everything, so I did. It was a better thing to wear than braces on my teeth."

IN 1972, when she was 17 years old, Mrs. Qualls qualified for the AAU girls' national competition with a 19-foot, four-inch long jump. She also took sec-

ond place in the long jump in competition for women athletes 18 and older.

The top six winners in the girls' competition were invited to the U.S. Olympic trials. Mrs. Qualls placed fourth in the trials and was qualified for the Olympics.

Through the years that she was competing in AAU events, Mrs. Qualls became known as "the little girl from Michigan."

"I was five feet three and had pig-tails," she said. In 1972, because of her size, she realized she would "never be

an international threat for the Olympics."

She entered Eastern Michigan University in 1972 and continued to compete in AAU events.

IN BOTH 1973 and 1974 she placed second in the long jump in the AAU indoor nationals.

Also, both years she was on the United States team in the USA-USSR meet and placed fourth both years. Her last competition was in 1975 when she took first place in the college nationals in Eugene, Ore.

"My senior year I began to evaluate what I wanted to do," she said. "I knew because of my height and strength that I had pretty much realized my capabilities. I decided it was time to put my efforts elsewhere than in competition."

Mrs. Qualls taught in Flushing, near Flint, before coming to Detroit Country Day.

Now she is waiting anxiously for a decision on the 1980 Olympics.
"The Olympics are not like any other world, college or international competition," she said. "They are unique. Most athletes wait for years to do this."



Susie Qualls' life now revolves around her teaching duties at Detroit Country Day. Here she helps Dennis Archer. (Staff photo by Stephen Cantrell)

Farmington actress in play

Barbara Bean, a Farmington resident, will be playing the mother in the Southfield Repertory Theatre production of "Rapunzel and the Witch."

The production is scheduled for four performances 1 and 3 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, Feb. 16-17.

Performances will be presented at the Southfield Parks and Recreation Center, 26000 Evergreen Road. Admission will be \$2.50 for children and adults with special rates for groups and senior citizens.

Ms. Bean has had extensive experience in acting, singing and dancing. A graduate of Wayne State University with a master's degree in interpretative reading and readers' theater, she has appeared in many professional plays including "Showboat" and

"Where's Charley?"
Recently she appeared in the Southfield Repertory Theatre's production of "Hansel and Gretel." She portrayed Gretel. She teaches ballet, tap, jazz and dance at several studios.

Others in the cast of "Rapunzel" include Jeannie Head of Dearborn as Rapunzel, and Peggy Thorp of Royal Oak as the witch. The prince will be played by Harry Westel of Dearborn. Otto the father will be played by Greg Zellen.

The Southfield Repertory Theatre is supported by the Michigan Council for the Arts, the Southfield Arts Council and the city of Southfield.
For additional information on the production or the theater, call the Southfield Parks and Recreation Department at 354-9603.

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