

Trainer realizes Olympic dream

By Ralph R. Echlinaw
Staff Writer

Where seeing the world is concerned, the U.S. Navy's got nothing on the Olympics.

As part of the U.S. Olympic training staff, West Bloomfield High School athletic trainer Erika Ottoboni has been to Minnesota, California, Alaska, Oklahoma, Colorado, Finland, Japan, all since 1988, and next month she'll add Italy, Switzerland and France to her itinerary.

Ottoboni leaves Jan. 2 to work with the United States Olympic long-track speed skaters for a month in Italy and Switzerland.

Then it's off to Albertville, France (75 miles east of Lyon) to tend the U.S. women's downhill ski team in February, partly because Ottoboni happens to be one of two trainers on a staff of 18 who ski.

ALTHOUGH THE TRAINING staff is no longer allowed to march in the traditional Olympic parade, Ottoboni doesn't mind. "How can I complain?" she said. "I get to go to

the Olympics). There's nothing I can complain about."

Ottoboni began life in 1961, the daughter of Danish immigrants who settled in Farmington Hills. She swam for the North Farmington High School swim team, graduated in 1979, and attended Oakland Community College for a year "because I didn't even want to go college."

Castling about for a career, Ottoboni talked to a Central Michigan University recruiter who turned her on to that school's inaugural athletic training program. "I was a swimmer," she said, "but when I got to college I decided swimming wouldn't pay the bills."

"It sounds like I'm from the dark ages, (but) nobody ever heard of athletic training (at that time)."

Several semesters later, Ottoboni was among the first CMU graduates with an athletic training bachelor's degree.

In a burgeoning market for athletic trainers created largely by liability concerns when athletes are injured, Ottoboni quickly found work with Henry Ford Hospital.

The hospital, in turn, farmed her out to West Bloomfield schools when a full-time trainer was deemed indispensable. So her pay checks may be drawn on Henry Ford accounts, but the school district pays the hospital for Ottoboni's services.

It occurred to the West Bloomfield resident in 1986 that working with the Olympic team was a goal worthy of supreme effort and dedication which she subsequently applied. "I thought it would be the greatest thing to go (to the Olympics)," she said. "You grow up watching it on TV. And I knew I wasn't going to get there swimming."

BUT ONE DOESN'T just submit an application, get hired and dance off to the games. Ottoboni has been required to serve without pay in various capacities at eight locations and events since 1988. It's called paying your dues.

"(But) for everything you get out of it, it's more than worth it," Ottoboni effused, adding, "See the world. Be part of the Olympics."

She is having difficulty, however, convincing people that the much-an-

ticipated hoop slaughter expected to be perpetrated by a squad of professional U.S. cagers upon the rest of the world will not occur in February. "A lot of people don't know the winter games are going on," she confessed. "A lot of people go, 'Oh, are you going to watch basketball too?'"

Although one might expect that someone with a resume as impressive as Ottoboni's is about to become would not remain in her present job long, she said she's quite content with the West Bloomfield venue.

Sitting on the floor in WBHS's gym watching a hoop scrimmage last week, Ottoboni said, "I can come in here in the worst possible mood and these kids will put me in a great mood. At this point I'm happy to be here. The (male athletes) are probably nicer to me than they are to their sisters."

Indeed, Ottoboni has become such a locker room fixture that she's "become one of the guys." Freshman boys, she said, are often alarmed to see a "girl" in their domain, but the upper classmen say, "That's not a girl. That's just Britta."



DAK DEAN/staff photographer

Ottoboni cleans out a wound sustained during a junior varsity basketball scrimmage.

campus pipeline

If you have news from a college, university or other campus of higher education — and there's a Farmington-area connection — we'd like to hear from you. Send items to: Campus Pipeline, Farmington Observer, 21898 Farmington Road, Farmington 48335.

• SHE'S INTERNING
Ablion College senior Alicia Courtney of Farmington Hills is spending the fall semester working on an internship at the Ablion Community

Hospital. This internship is providing hands-on experience in the field of medicine. She is a biology major and a 1988 graduate of Harrison High School.

• HE'S ELECTED
Andrew Walling Drake of Farmington Hills was one of seven Allegheny College seniors elected to the Eta Chapter of the Phi Beta Kappa national honorary scholastic fraternity. A graduate of North Farmington High School, he is pursuing a major in chemistry. Allegheny College is in Meadville, Pa.

• STUDENT VOLUNTEER

As part of a student volunteer project to rebuild fire-gutted crack houses in a section of Indianapolis, Ind., Kathryn Perrin of Farmington Hills was one of 80 DePauw University students who worked this fall to prepare the houses for renovation and sale to low-income families. Perrin is a senior majoring in chemistry. She is a 1988 graduate of Mercy High School.

• NEW GRADUATES

Thomas Patrick Galvin of Farm-

ington Hills graduated from the University of Dayton.

Jean Sialoff of Farmington Hills graduated from Washburn Community College.

• SHE'S ELECTED

Dawn Syrlan of Farmington was elected senior vice president of international Business Fraternity of "Delta Sigma Pi" at Western Michigan University.

She is a 1988 graduate of Farmington High School and is a senior majoring in business management with a minor in communication.



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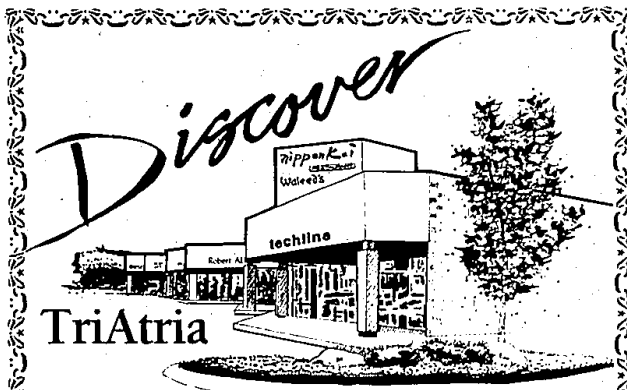
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