

Sharon Clayton holds promise

Midas touch reaps 5 golds — more to come

By Bruce Gates

Since Sharon Clayton came to York, she has developed something of a Midas touch: It seems practically every OWIAA long-distance race the 19-year-old freshman touches turns into gold. And so far, this Midas touch has resulted in five golds for York University, including two at the OWIAA indoor championships held at the CNE Coliseum February 25.



Sharon Clayton

In that meet she "ran" away with golds in the 1500 and 1000-metre events to help place York to third place — a feat in itself for York considering it had only a six-woman team compared to an average of 12 on the other university squads.

In those two races, Clayton set a York record in the 1000 metres with a time of 2:55.9. And in the 1500 metres, she set a personal best time of 4:33.0.

Clayton's other three golds came at university competitions held earlier this year: At the OWIAA outdoor track championships in October at McMaster, she took the 3,000-metre and the 1,500-metre

races. She set a varsity record in the 3,000 metres.

And then, a week later in Kingston, Clayton won a gold for York in the OWIAA cross-country championships.

"I'm very pleased with my performance," she says. "I didn't think I would do this well in my first year of university because of the tougher competition."

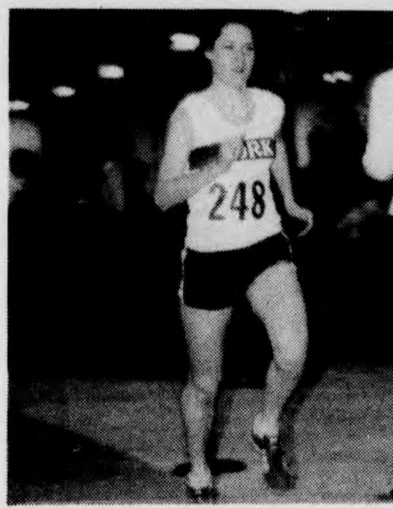
Or so one would think. During her five years at Runnymede Collegiate, the same school that gave York all-star basketballer Bo Pelech, Clayton took part in high school championship meets but never finished any higher than second. Perhaps the "tougher competition" has brought out the best in Sharon Clayton.

Certainly constant practice and her association with the Toronto Olympic Club, for which she runs year-round, have gone a long way in making her a fine runner.

Since 1972, Clayton has been into track and field through her membership in the Ontario Track and Field Association, and in 1974 she travelled out West with the Toronto Olympic Club and took part in the Junior Olympics in Edmonton and the National Senior Championships in Winnipeg.

In Edmonton she placed second in the 3,000 metres. But in Winnipeg that same second-place finish was good enough to set an outdoor record for 15-year-olds (9:48.8). (Three weeks before when she was in Sudbury, Clayton actually ran a better time in the 3,000 metres — 9:46.8 — but it wasn't counted because the record forms weren't filed.)

In all, Clayton has set three age-class records for the 3,000 metres — two of them at outdoor events in



Midas at work

1974 and one indoors in 1975 at the CNE.

Clayton, who plans on majoring in Physical Education, says, "Track has become a way of life for me. I really enjoy it — not just for the competition, but also for the physical and psychological conditioning and the people you get to meet."

Physical conditioning means running practice, and Clayton does it six days a week, taking only

Fridays off for a rest. (Most of her competitions take place on Saturdays.) Often, she'll use the scenic trails of High Park, which is close to her home. Or she'll run circuits around the York campus. But wherever she runs, Clayton tries to vary the routes as much as possible to keep the training interesting.

And it will be interesting next year to see how well Sharon Clayton will do in her second year of university competition. All of York will undoubtedly be looking forward to a repeat performance of this year's fine showing.

"It's going to be a tough act to follow next year," she says, "But I'll give it my best shot."

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I Thessalonians 4:16, 17

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