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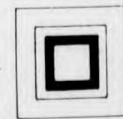
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# SPORTS FEATURE

## On and off the track

By DAVID BUNDAS

For six years Susan Summers toiled as head coach of track and field at McMaster before accepting a position at the University of Saskatchewan. Today Summers is the head coach at York and lives among athletes nearly every minute of her life.

Lesa Mayes met Summers at a meet in Saskatoon (a two hour drive from her home in North Battleford) and within a few months, her life would change dramatically. Summers would eventually persuade the aspiring athlete to move with her to Toronto and end up taking her in as a boarder and protégé.

"It was a very big move for me," Mayes said. "It was probably the biggest decision I've ever had to make."

"She kept calling me," Summers explained. "One day she was coming and another day she wasn't." Lesa's decision involved more than moving away from her parents. "It's not the distance that bothered me, but rather the sacrifices I had to make," Mayes explained. "I was still in high school when I first met Sue and I had to give up being with my friends."

For Summers, the decision to move to York was made because of the excellent facilities and because Summers feels the talent pool here is the best in Canada. It also provided her with a head coaching position for both the men's and women's team as well as readily accessible competition. "In Saskatchewan you'd have to travel long distances to get good competition, whereas here you have the fastest man in the world (Ben Johnson) right in your own backyard," Summers said.

Mayes agrees that the facilities and coaching are superior at York but admits that she probably wouldn't have moved from her home if it hadn't been for Summers influence.

Mayes and Summers have a unique relationship. They are roommates as well as being close friends. Summers' husband, Milan Popadich (a retired decathlete and the 1983 and 1984 Canadian champion) is also an athlete, so their apartment houses three competitive people. "My job's my life," Summers said. "Everything revolves around it; it's almost like a religion."

"I haven't lived on my own yet," Mayes said. "You can imagine what it's like always having your coach around and Sue always having an athlete around."

"It's not the greatest, but we knew it would be a short-term thing," Summers explained. "Her parents asked us to take her in because she's only 18 and didn't know anyone. I think they feel better knowing she's with us."

Mayes specialty is the heptathlon (seven events). For outdoor tournaments that includes: 100 metre hurdles, high jump, long jump, shot-put, javelin, 800 metres and 200 metres. Quite a task for an 18 year old novice. She has set herself personal goals and aspires, like many other athletes, to go to the Olympics. "I'd like to go to the Olympics, but I can't say when," Mayes said. "The '88 Olympics are coming up so soon and I've got a lot of work to do because I just started training for the heptathlon in September. So if I'm not ready for '88 then I'll work for the '92 games."

Mayes considers herself an "up-and-comer," yet she has already achieved great success as a junior in Saskatchewan and at the OWIAA championships last weekend. Mayes holds junior records in the indoor long jump, 60 metre hurdles and outdoor records in the long jump and pentathlon (in Saskatchewan). Two weeks ago, competing in her first pentathlon at the senior level, Mayes was fifth best in the country.

What really astounded onlookers was Mayes' success at the OWIAA championships last weekend. All she did was take the gold in the long jump and silver in the 60 metre hurdles and sprint (defeating Olympic silver medalist France Gareau).

Unfortunately, outstanding performances by athletes have been recently greeted with cynical accusations that drug use distorted their results. Summers and Mayes emphatically deny any allegations of performance-enhancing drug use at York. "No York athlete has ever been tested positive," Summers said.

Urinalysis is done randomly, but at the Canadian finals, the top finisher and someone else in the top eight will also be tested. Canadian sprinter Jim Dwyer, who once trained at York and now works out in the States, has made public allegations of drug use by Canadian amateur athletes.

According to Summers, being tested for drugs can be inconvenient for an athlete, "especially after a decathlon or heptathlon because you've been out there all day and your totally dehydrated," Summers explained. "Before the 800 metres, everyone's usually nervous so you go to the bathroom before the race. So I've heard of people having to wait three hours before they're able to give a sample." Mayes has never been tested.

Mayes is not the only successful athlete in her family. Her brother Rueben was voted rookie of the year in the National Football Conference (NFL) and was recently named the outstanding professional male ath-

lete from the greater New Orleans area.

Does Lesa ever get tired of being labelled as "Rueben's sister" or feel any added pressure having such a successful brother? "It's different between the East and the West," Mayes said. "Back home they referred to me as Lesa Mayes, not Rueben's sister. Here the press expects more out of a person and recently being introduced as Rueben's sister has begun to bother me."

Success hasn't spoiled the Mayes family. They remain a humble, tightly knit unit. "My family has taken everything in stride," Mayes explained. "It's something (Rueben's success) that has come on gradually. Ever since he was two years old, we knew he was special. There hasn't been any drastic changes, we're just a little more comfortable. I don't think my family will ever change."

On a more personal side, Lesa (a phys-ed and science major) enjoys listening to funk but admits, "I don't have a lot of time to go out because I'm out of town competing almost every weekend."

Mayes intends to enter the sports journalism field.

Who serves as Mayes' role model? "That's obvious—my brother of course," Mayes said. "He's done great things, and he's been my role model ever since he took me to my first track practice when I was eight years old at six-thirty in the morning."

Sue Summers and members of York's track team are happy that he did.



**ME AND MY MENTOR:** Although York's Lesa Mayes considers herself an "up and comer" she has already posted impressive statistics.

JAMES HOGGETT