

# sports and recreation

## Nancy Rooks struggles to maintain momentum

By Andy Buckstein

To see this nineteen year old blonde walk around campus from class to class one would never suspect that she is one of this country's most promising athletes. At a mere five feet and ninety pounds, this bespectacled freshman looks more fragile and frail than she does athletic.

But athletic Nancy Rooks is, as she has proven time and again; ever since she entered North York's George S. Henry Secondary School back in 1974. It was not until Grade 11, in the fall of 1975, that York's head track and cross country coach, George Gluppe, noticed her budding talent. Right away Gluppe recognized the fine talent that he had under his wing and he made what seemed like brash predictions to others that this girl was the greatest talent he had ever coached.

To say that no one believed him might be an exaggeration, but there were surely not many who did. If Rooks looks fragile walking around in street clothes, she looks even more so in her brief running shorts and singlet.

The fact remained though that Rooks was beginning to be noticed at major high school meets. She was fifth in the senior high school provincial cross country championships in the fall of 1976, and followed that with impressive medal performances at the next summer's all-Ontario high school track and field finals.

By this time Rooks had joined the York University Track Club (which is independent from the University team) which was also under the guidance of Gluppe, and her training took on new meaning. The high school season had given her confidence for the future, confidence that seemed to be lacking previously, even though she was always the most determined of the twenty or so runners that trained regularly in the club.

Over the summer of 1977 Nancy

trained regularly and kept up a full time job as well, but when the next school season opened she was ready. In her final high school year, Rooks won every single high school race that she entered, taking the Ontario high school championship in cross country and on the track in both the 1500 and 3000 metres. So awesome were her track performances that she completely obliterated the old Canadian Interscholastic (high school) records in both events.

### AIMS FOR TOP

However Rooks was not content with merely winning the high school titles and she began to tackle the country's best, both over the hill and dale of cross country and on the track.

With her obvious determination and talent it was not a surprise to those that knew her that she placed third in the women's open category at the Canadian cross country championships, thereby qualifying to represent Canada both at the American AAU championships and the World Championships. At these two meets she had very credible finishes of 17th and 38th and she was the second Canadian finisher in both races.

For her efforts over her high school career, Nancy was awarded the highest possible athletic award at George S. Henry, which goes annually to the most outstanding graduating student in athletics.

By this time Rooks was also well known south of the 49th parallel and she had received many offers of athletic scholarships to such universities as Florida State, Iowa State and North Carolina.

It might be appropriate at this time to point out that Rooks is no slouch in academics either. All the way through high school she maintained an A average and she has continued right on getting top marks in her inaugural year at York.

Despite the offers from the



United States, Rooks decided to come to York for three major reasons: "The new indoor/outdoor complex to be completed by next fall, a desire to stay in Canada, and the fact that I did not particularly want to change coaches." (Gluppe is the varsity sprint coach and therefore it would be easy for him to also keep on coaching Rooks.)

### UNEMPLOYED

The next major decision that Rooks made was to remain unemployed for the 1978 summer so that she could take dead aim on qualifying for the Canadian team to compete in Edmonton at the Commonwealth Games by training twice daily.

She did just that by placing second in the 3000 metres at both of the Commonwealth Games Trials, the first of which was also the National Championships. At the Games themselves Rooks ran a gutsy race as she finished fifth in the field, just one place behind the top Canadian.

Later that summer Rooks ran another International meet against Italy in a dual meet where she ran away from the field to take a convincing victory in the 1500 metres.

What makes Rooks so outstanding? "The fact that I've always improved has been very encouraging for me, and of course it is always a challenge to beat the clock." Unlike many others she states that, "I enjoy the long runs in training (10-12 miles) and what is even more fun is chasing the guys that I train with, although they don't particularly like it when I beat them."

"A lot of hard work goes into being a distance runner", she said, "and it sometimes gets to the point where you hate to get up in the morning to go out and train. Let's face it, the sport is not all that glamorous and the people who do take part work hard and get very little recognition for it unless they should reach the top."

### WORKAHOLIC

Gluppe endorses Nancy's determination to succeed by saying that "she is a workaholic who knows that attendance in the classroom or in her running is a primary requisite for progress."

"Nancy is an intense individual who has always tried to be the best she can possibly be in all aspects of her life. It is this desire to excel that has made the job of coaching

her easy for me."

By the time the summer had drawn to a close, Nancy entered York where she quickly showed her talents to the university competition by winning the 800 and 1500 metres at the Ontario University championships, both performances setting new varsity records. When it came time for the Nationals Rooks demolished the field in recording a runaway triumph.

However fate intervened and the toll of the heavy training had begun to show on Nancy Rooks. Bothered off and on by recurring soreness in her legs which began last summer, she was only able to run two indoor meets this year — and they were both superb efforts.

At the York Invitational in January, Nancy set new varsity records in both the 800 and 1500 metres. The 1500 metre performance of 4:17.1 was particularly satisfying as it broke the old meet record of Canada's most famous female middle distance runner, Abby Hoffman, and it was the fastest any Canadian ran indoors this year.

### CRIPPLED BY INJURY

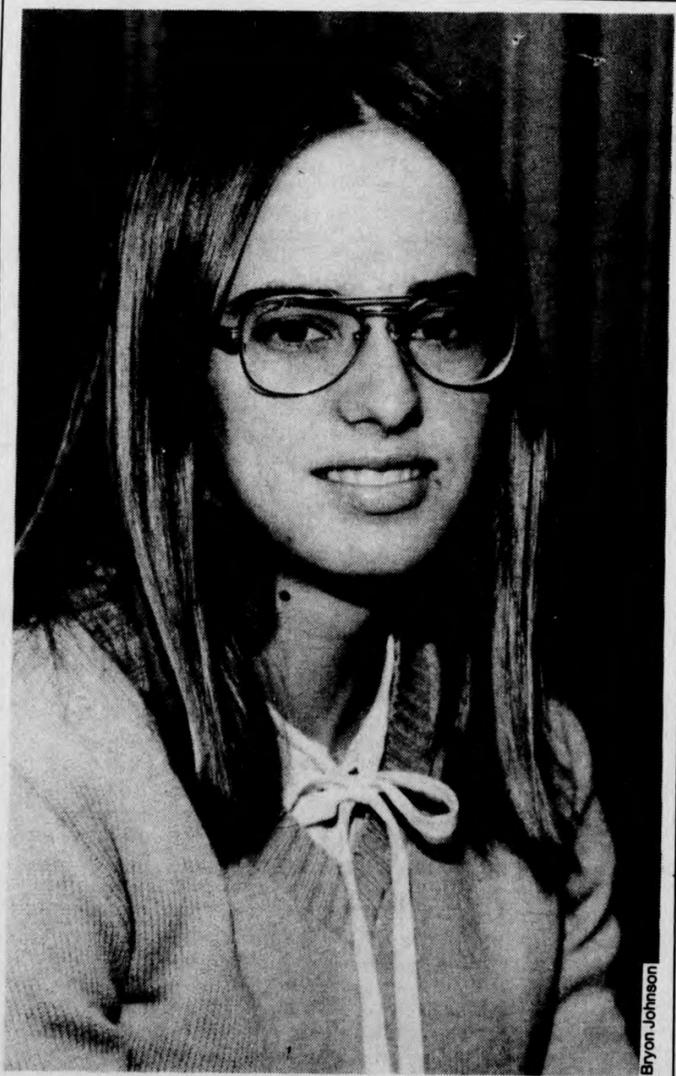
But that was all she wrote (as they say) for that was the last meet Nancy Rooks ran. A combination of the tight turns on the Maple Leaf Gardens' track and a heavy training schedule led to what has now been diagnosed as bursitis in her left knee. So painful is the injury that Nancy can no longer train. She tried swimming for awhile to keep up her excellent aerobic condition, but even that

began to bother the knee and so she now remains sedentary.

The injury has depressed her (it has caused her to miss the Worcester cross country championships as well as all of the indoor championship meets), but not to the point where she is willing to give up the sport. Although there has been no medical assurance as to when she will be able to run again, Nancy Rooks has far too much talent and perseverance to give up. Once her knee heals properly Nancy will again begin the battle against her competitors, and more importantly against the clock as she attempts to meet the Olympic qualifying standard in the 1500 metres (4:10.0).

Nancy Rooks is a very talented runner who has improved considerably in the last two years. Given this talent and with her great desire to excel in all that she does, York's 1978-79 Female Athlete of the Year will hopefully overcome her injury and will most assuredly overcome the disappointment of having to miss this summer's second World Cup of Track and Field to be held in Montreal at the end of August (as her pre-injury goal had been for this year).

The next major international meet for her to set her sights on once she has fully recuperated will be the 1980 Olympics in Moscow, and even though she refuses to make the Olympics her number one objective, with Nancy's pursuit of excellence and her dedication to her running, I for one would not bet against her.



## York rocks U of T

York, over the past weekend, won the University of Toronto Invitational Mixed Curling Bonspiel. The York team consisting of Skip Mike Davidson, Third Chris Bonspiel. The York team, consisting of Skip Mike Davidson, Third Chris Hushasen, Second Scott Harcourt and Lead Kathy Millisan, played extremely well in winning the First Annual U of T. Bonspiel. The team was the leader after the elimination rounds by a slight margin, over two teams from U of T. and one from Ryerson. In the semi-finals York outpointed Ryerson's Ken Freek, 9-2, while U of T's, Brian Jones gunned down Larry Horton, also of U of T 9-3. In the finals the stage was set for a classic confrontation between the cross town rivals U of T. and York University. York's individual team members experience and talent, grinded out a 6-4 victory over a dejected U of T. team.

York curlers have had an outstanding year by capturing two out of three tournaments they entered. Hopefully next year, York might be able to add a women's curling team to its varsity ranks, so that they can totally dominate men's, women's and mixed university curling.