

# On the **MOMENT**

# A rapid runner

## to the nation's elite



A year ago, even though she was already one of the Elmira area's best runners, Molly Huddle felt she was capable of scaling much greater heights.

"I knew that if I worked harder, I could do better," she said. "I was never really a bad runner. This year I trained regularly, and that's how I improved so much."

How much did she improve? Almost beyond measure.

Many grueling miles of training later, Molly is the best female high-school runner in New York state. She earned that distinction this past spring not only by winning Section 4 titles in the 1,500- and 3,000-meter runs, but capturing state championships, also, in those events.

The 16-year-old from Notre Dame High School didn't stop there. She excelled in a national championship meet in Raleigh, N.C., in mid-June, finishing third in both the 1,600 and 3,200.

Her times place among the country's top 10 of all recent performances by high-school girls, according to *Track and Field News*. The magazine ranks Molly eighth in the 1,600 meters, with a time of 4 minutes, 50 seconds; and ninth in the 3,200 meters, with a time of 10:21.

These accomplishments didn't come by accident. After finishing second in the Section 4 Class C championships as a sophomore, Molly embarked on a rigorous training schedule.

"I have a set number of 35 miles a week, four to six miles a day," Molly noted. Saying she prefers training outdoors no matter what the conditions — "I hate running on treadmills," she remarked —

Molly has been known to run in 2 feet of snow. On the other hand, she's not fond of running in 90-degree heat so her summer schedule is usually in the mornings or evenings.

On weekends she trains with her father, Bob, an accomplished distance runner who serves as Molly's adviser. But during the week Molly is on her own. Though training can be rigorous, the 5-foot, 4-inch runner said she's come to enjoy it.

"I just anticipate the feeling of being done, and having done a good job. At first it didn't feel great all the time, but now I don't

feel good when I don't do it. It wakes me up and, when you're done, you feel like you accomplished something," said Molly, who attends Our Lady of Lourdes Parish.

Despite her feverish dedication, running doesn't occupy Molly's entire life. As her senior year at Notre Dame looms, Molly looks forward to playing soccer and basketball once more, though she had considered dropping both sports in favor of year-round training.

"I like to be on a team and don't know how much I'd enjoy it being by myself," she explained.

By the time next spring rolls around, Molly will be looking forward to defending her state track titles. Not only did she win Class C crowns in both the 1,500 and 3,000 this past June, but her times of 4:34 and 9:43 were lower than the Class A and B champs as well. Molly also anticipates a return trip to nationals where she "can aim for a better spot than third."

Molly's accomplishments have attracted attention from such universities as Notre Dame, Duke, Princeton and Stanford. "It's just mail, nothing definite," she said. She hopes to major in biology and possibly pre-med in college. If so, she would once again follow in the footsteps of her father, who is a physician.

Molly expects the level of competition she will face in college to rise sharply; however, she also stated, "I'm nowhere near my peak yet." In fact, she's inspired by the accomplishments of the nation's top adult runners: "When you hear news about them, you say 'If they can do it, let's see what I can do.'"

Staying motivated shouldn't be a problem, she added. "At this point I'm not worried about burning out. I still look forward to running," she said. "Even when I'm not in the season I'm pretty much into the sport, reading the magazines."

Looking several years into the future, Molly is entertaining the possibility of a 2008 trip to Beijing, China — the recently announced site of the Summer Olympics. Molly thinks Beijing is her best shot at becoming an Olympian, even though the next Summer Games will take place in 2004 in Athens, Greece.

"Distance runners don't really peak until their late 20s and early 30s," Molly said. "I don't really picture myself there. Not yet."

Story by  
**Mike Latona**

Photo by  
**Karin  
von Voigtlander**