

# Palo Alto's Pam Blackburn high jumps way to g

By BILL PATERSON

Pam Blackburn of Palo Alto is an average teenager with similar interests of most youngsters her age.

But there is one thing unique about the 14-year-old miss — she just happens to be one of the best women high jumpers in the country.

What's more amazing is she has only been training seriously since April.

But Miss Blackburn, the daughter of Russell and Mary Blackburn, has been high jumping on and off since grammar school.

"I always liked jumping over something," she said.

Last weekend Pam competed in a National AAU girls' and women's meet in Irvine. She captured first place in her 14 to 15 year age group with a jump of 5 feet 6 inches. She also took two fourth places in the women's competition and the girls' 14 to 17 division.

As a result of her 5-7 jump in the women's event Pam has been selected an alternate on the AAU team that will compete in Europe next month and August.

But her track coach, Bruce Hori, a track and wrestling coach at Wilbur Junior High, said it isn't likely she'll

compete. He said she goes only if one of the top two jumpers cancel out.

However, Pam has a bright future high-jumping.

Hori started coaching Pam two months ago when he happened to see her performing on the Wilbur track. Since then he has had her lifting light weights, running and practicing high jumping at least twice a week.

He also encouraged Pam to join the Palo Alto Track Club, an affiliate of the AAU, so she could compete in amateur events.

"She started in grammar school but the results started to show at Wilbur," Hori said.

Miss Blackburn uses the Fosbury flop technique. This form of high jumping was named after a former Oregon State star who made flying over the bar backwards popular. Hori said this method of jumping is easier for Pam.

Hori not only follows Pam's workouts, but sometimes he uses films of her in practice to help her maintain the proper form.

Miss Blackburn is tall, standing a hair over 5 foot 8 inches. She has been jumping close to her own height in recent events.

Hori attributes much of Pam's success to her natural ability and

strength. Yet Hori isn't sure how much better she will be three years from now, when the 1976 Olympics are held in Montreal.

He said women usually reach their full potential as athletes in their early teens.

Hori doesn't know if Pam has reached her full potential. "I'm not sure whether this is her big year or if it will be next year," he explained.

Although Hori said he isn't looking that far into the future, he would be optimistic of Pam's performing at the next Olympics if she can maintain an interest and continue to develop physically. "I think she has the confidence to do it," Hori added.

He also noted Pam is presently two inches short of becoming a world-class women's high jumper. Pam has already out-jumped a former Olympic high jumper at the Irvine meet, he said.

"On any given day she can be first or second," he added.

But even if she should falter in the future Hori doesn't believe the experience would be a great loss to Pam.

"The rewards from her competing are immaterialistic so long as she enjoys the social benefits," Hori said. Although he said the urge to win is as dominant as the social benefits, "the rewards are also there if you don't win."

Hori said Pam is an "average" teenager with no special interests except



National age group champion Pam Blackburn



# Blackburn glory

high jumping, horses and boys. She agreed with her coach's evaluation, except the part about boys.

Although Pam is a better jumper than most males her age, she doesn't believe women can compete with men on an equal basis in track. "I don't think a woman can out-jump a man," she giggled.

Hori agreed saying the comparison of man and women track records show quite a disparity in performance. He added, however, the emphasis in sports has been on the man and not the woman.

Pam wasn't allowed to compete in track at Wilbur because of an area rule prohibiting it. However, Hori said a state ruling, that takes effect Sunday, will allow girls to participate in any school sport — including football.

Pam enters Cubberley High this fall, but will not participate with the boy's track team. Hori said Pam will remain with the Palo Alto Track Club.

"She wouldn't get anything out of the boys program anyway," Hori stated.

Pam said she hadn't noticed any jealousy among members of the Wilbur track team, whom she often practiced with. Hori said his athletes accepted her as a "good jumping partner."

Meanwhile, Pam said she has no future plans but to keep on jumping as high as she can.



## Only the beginning

(Times photos by Ken Yimm)

Pam Blackburn, 14, has cleared 5 feet 7 inches in high jump after just two months of serious training.