

TRACK & FIELD

Graham prepares to go for the gusto

Coming out of the final turn, Ann Graham holds a commanding lead in the finals of the women's 400-meter intermediate hurdles at the U.S. Olympic Festival in Los Angeles.

Even so, victory isn't imminent. For a millisecond, Graham loses momentum after clipping the eighth hurdle. Sandra Cummings, who is running two lanes to the inside of Graham, seizes the moment and

ger after 200 meters, I just relaxed. Instead of striding, I just tried to attack the hurdles the rest of the way. That race showed me that my speed was still there after the TAC championships."

For Graham, a St. Augustine's graduate, winning a festival gold medal is solid evidence that she's a legitimate contender for America's '92 Olympic team.

Graham missed nearly two years of training and competition, taking time off to start a family (her only son, Trevor Jr. is now two years old). And since she's only been back in action since December '90, her progress is all the more remarkable.

"I'm pleased with how things have worked out," Graham said. "Placing seventh in TAC (USA/Mobil meet), showed that I could run with the best. Nobody expected me to make the TAC finals. But that's the goal I had set for myself."

Getting physically prepared for a demanding event like the intermediate hurdles is agonizing even if you're in top physical condition. But having to come back and recapture the level of fitness attained before her preg-

dies champ in '88, her senior year. Additionally, she was an All-American in the 100-meter hurdles, long jump and triple jump.

Trevor became Ann's coach three years ago while she was still running for St. Aug's. He was always confident that she could make the transition to the world-class level. But he also knew it would be wiser to gradually increase the intensity of her training, based on what she could handle at a given time.

"She's coming along," Trevor said. "But I'm still not satisfied with the last 150 meters of the race. She'll get stronger. She's just starting to develop. By next year, she'll be on a training schedule that's three times harder than anything she's ever

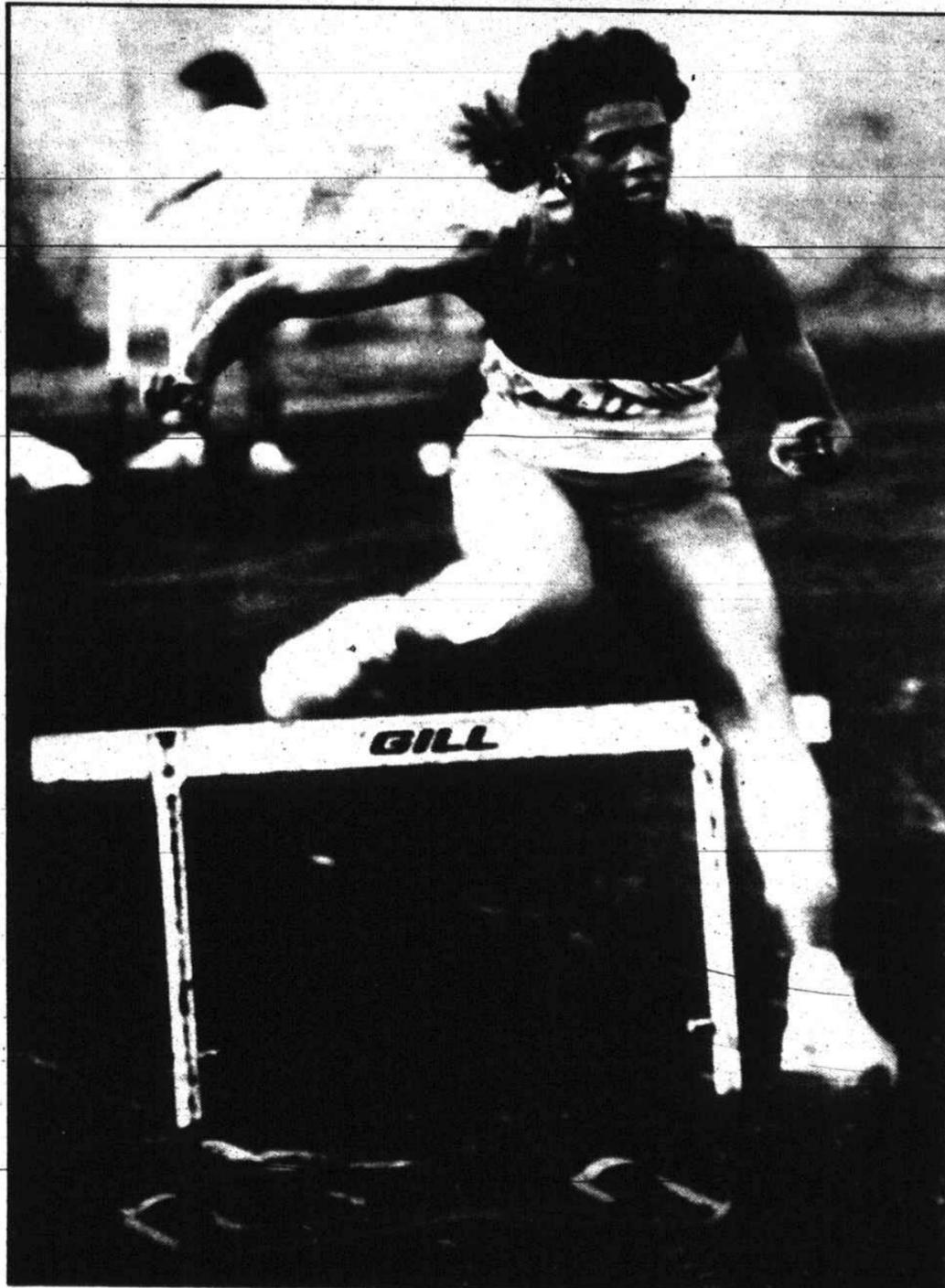


Photo by T-Lee

Graham is showing that she is an up and coming force in the 400 intermediate hurdles, winning the gold medal at the U.S. Olympic Festival in Los Angeles last month.

gradually closes the distance. But by the ninth hurdle, Graham regains her form, then resumes her kick to the tape, winning by a very comfortable 12 meters in 56.88.

"I felt pretty good considering that before the Olympic Festival, I hadn't raced in a month," Graham said. "When I saw I had made up the stag-

Graham's LA triumph was not a case of happenstance. Four weeks prior to the festival, she finished seventh in the USA/Mobil Track & Field Championship, clocking a personal best of 56.52. Making the finals of an elite field, in Graham's view, was a victory all by itself.

And a major one at that.



Photo by T-Lee

Track and field is a true family affair for the Grahams. Husband Trevor, who is Ann's coach, goes over some fine points of technique during a training session as Trevor Jr. looks on.

nancy was easier said than done. The mind was willing, but the body was hardly ready to co-operate.

"I felt stronger after I had the baby," she said. "But the hardest thing for me when I started running again was the physical part. I was ready mentally, but physically it was another story."

Graham's quest to reach world-class status is being directed by her husband, Trevor, who is also a track coach (starts as an assistant at Kansas State later this month). A star on the oval for St. Augustine's in the late '80s, Trevor ran for the Jamaican 4 x 400 relay team that won the silver medal in the '88 Seoul Olympics. He was also a Division II All-American and national champ in the 400 and 800 during his career.

Ann, whose maiden name is Hall, was the Division II intermediate hur-

done."

In retrospect, perhaps Graham's showing at the festival and at the USA/Mobil meet was not so surprising. She had already shown signs of being able to compete favorably at the world-class level.

In March, she more than held her own in the Gainesville Gatorade meet at the University of Florida. With Soviet athletes in the field, the Gatorade had a definite world-class flavor.

Graham finished third (57.75) behind the two Soviets — S. Ordina won in 56.34 and C. Ledovskaya was second at 57.52. But more importantly, she proved to herself, and to them, that she belonged on the same track. In recent years, the Soviets and other Eastern European athletes have dominated the women's intermediate

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