

# Track and Field



*Kate Schmidt*



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### *What a Difference a Year Makes*

The big hope for a gold medal among the U.S. women's field contingent at the 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal was javelin thrower Kate Schmidt. She had earned a bronze medal in the 1972 Games and had surpassed her Munich performance several times. In addition, she had worked hard throughout the 1976 season. As it turned out, however, no one was more disappointed than Schmidt when all she could win in Montreal was another bronze medal. She almost did not get that, except that her final heave traveled 209' 10" (63.96 m) to move her into third place. Following the Olympics, she underwent surgery on her foot and was put out of action for some time. She was still searching for her form when the 1977 season got under way. A year after her disappointment in Montreal, Kate was still foundering, losing more meets than she was winning. In the World Cup Games at Düsseldorf, West Germany, her best throw was only 195' 1" (59.46 m), 23 feet off her personal best, to finish fourth in a field of eight.

Then, on Sept. 11, 1977, in an unimportant meet at Fürth, West Germany, the native of Pacific Palisades, Calif.,

uncorked a throw of 227' 5" (69.32 m) and expunged a year's worth of bad memories by becoming the world record holder in the javelin. Schmidt, who stands 6' 2" and weighs 175 lb, is a communications student at Long Beach State, in southern California, but spends as much time competing in Europe as she can. Her reasons are simple enough. "When it comes to women's field event training and competition", she says, "there is very little happening in the United States."

Yet despite her criticism—and the fact that she is the only woman not from Eastern Europe to hold a world record in a field event—Kate is no particular fan of training methods used in those countries. "I would never want to compete under the kind of pressure East European athletes are subjected to." Speaking of her biggest rival, East Germany's Ruth Fuchs, Schmidt says, "I've seen the expression on her face when she competes. She's petrified. She must win for her country, for socialism. I'm not exactly relaxed out there myself, but the pressure I'm under comes from within—it's self-generated—and I think most American athletes want to keep it that way."

*Kate Schmidt has her eyes set on Moscow, 1980*