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### Kathy McMillan

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# **Kathy McMillan**

Kathy McMillan was born on November 7, 1957 in Raeford, NC.

As a youth she liked to play in the woods and the playgrounds, often testing her ability to run and jump wide creeks.

McMillan attended Hoke County High School in North Carolina. In 1972-73, her freshman year, she long jumped beyond 16 feet, a spectacular feat for an athlete her age. Her coach, William Colston, knew that he had found an athlete of extreme talent. Later during high school, she became the North Carolina high school long jump champion. Later during high school she became the national high school long jump champion. She is a 9-time state outdoor track and field champion. During high school she won four titles in the long jump. There she set a North Carolina state record of 21-7, in 1976, that still stands today. She won three titles in the 220-yard dash (1974, '75, '76), and two titles in the 100-yard dash (1975, 1976).

Soon after graduation she won the silver medal in the long jump at the 1976 Montreal Olympics, where she jumped 21 ft. 10.25 in. This achievement matched that of another Tigerbelle, Willye White, who 20 years previously had achieved the best long jump ever by a U.S. woman in the Olympics.

After the games, Coach Ed Temple, seeing an excellent prospect in Kathy, persuaded her to enroll at Tennessee State University. She started at TSU in 1976 and graduated 1980.

Here she joined the Tigerbelle, the famed women's track and field team. During her long jumping career at TSU she placed second in the AAU competition in 1977 and 1978. In 1979 she won the AAU and the Pan American Games. In 1980 she placed second in the Olympic

trials, winning her a spot on the 1980 Olympic team. Unfortunately, her long training went for naught, as the U.S. boycotted the Moscow games.

The move to cancel the 1980 games caused frustration for not only Kathy but the rest of the team members, of which there were 450. As a consolation, the team was awarded more than 450 Congressional gold medals. The medals were so numerous that it was decided to make them gold plated, rather than the traditional solid gold.

At the 1983 Pan American Games she won gold once again in the long jump.

Coach Temple said of Kathy, “She is the most fierce competitor I have ever coached. She thrives on pressure. The greater it is, the better she is. I have never seen an athlete with more determination.”



### **Further Reading**

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