

SPORTS PEOPLE;

Support for Swimmer

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Body

The United States Senate has passed a bill, sponsored by Jeremiah Denton, Republican of Alabama, to grant Peter Berndt, a 22-year-old East German **swimmer**, American citizenship four years early. Berndt was granted political asylum in the United States on Jan. 7, 1985, after he defected at an airport in Oklahoma City while he was traveling with the East German team.

He wants to compete for the United States in the 1988 Olympics but must be an American citizen to do so. Berndt, a former world-record holder in the 40-meter individual medley, has enrolled at the University of Alabama and is competing on the team. The legislation may run into a snag in the House of Representatives, however, where a similar bill is being sponsored by Representative Ben Erdreich, Republican of Alabama. Representative Romano L. Mazzoli, Democrat of Kentucky, chairman of the House Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees and Law, has written Representative Erdreich, saying that the panel considers private immigration bills an "extraordinary remedy" for aliens with unusual problems. Representative Mazzoli has said there is no precedent for granting permanent residence or expedited citizenship, but Representative Erdreich said Monday that the **swimmer** was almost certain to get permanent residence status next year.

Graphic

photo of Peter Berndt (NYT)

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