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136 No. 14th

Ocel excels despite injury

Gymnast restricts herself to vault, beam and floor exercise

By Mark Derowitsch
 Staff Reporter

Despite a major setback, Mary Ocel remains a solid performer for the Nebraska women's gymnastics team. Ocel was an all-arounder before last season, but now the sophomore from Apple Valley, Minn., competes only on

"It's very hard for me to accept the fact that I'll never be an all-arounder again. It's hard because that's what gymnastics is: Almost everyone is an all-arounder. But now that I do only two or three events, I can excel in those," she said.

Despite her limitations, Nebraska coach Rick Walton was pleased with how well Ocel came off her injury.

"She made the finals on beam in the Big Eights; she was our only finalist on beam," Walton said. "We only used her in three events because she had a shoulder problem, but she was pretty consistent across the boards in those events."

When she decided she wanted to be a Husker, Ocel contacted Walton.

"I wasn't a really well-known gymnast, but I wrote Rick a letter," Ocel said. "Then Rick wrote back and wanted to fly me down here for a weekend. I just couldn't believe it."

Coming from a family with eight children, Ocel said that she was constantly around sports. But she was in sixth grade when she got her first taste of gymnastics.

"My family was very athletic," Ocel said, "so they kind of pushed me towards sports. All my brothers and sisters have been involved in sports. But my sister was involved in gymnastics and I liked it so I started practicing."

Ocel competed for Thompson's Academy of Gymnastics during high school, because, she said, gymnasts didn't have much chance getting scholarships if they competed in high school. She

was coached by Dan Schermann, currently a Nebraska volunteer assistant coach. While she was competing for TAGS, Ocel placed second in the all-around in the Minnesota state meet.

While college gymnastics is different, Ocel has found the transition to college easy.

"I like the team and competing, but I was used to working a lot harder," Ocel said. "I got to a point where they (the team) thought I was trying to kill

'I really want to get better. A lot of people come to college and want to stay where they are and they don't want to push themselves to get any better.'

— Ocel



Ocel

the vault, balance beam and floor exercise. She no longer performs on the uneven bars because of shoulder surgery last December.

"First semester I really struggled on bars with my shoulder," Ocel said. "I didn't have surgery until December and if I would have found out earlier, I might have been able to have the corrective surgery. But they really don't know if they can correct it now."

Brown will swim at championships

BROWN from Page 9

his NCAA qualifying times of 20.41 for the 50 free and 44.59 for the 100 free.

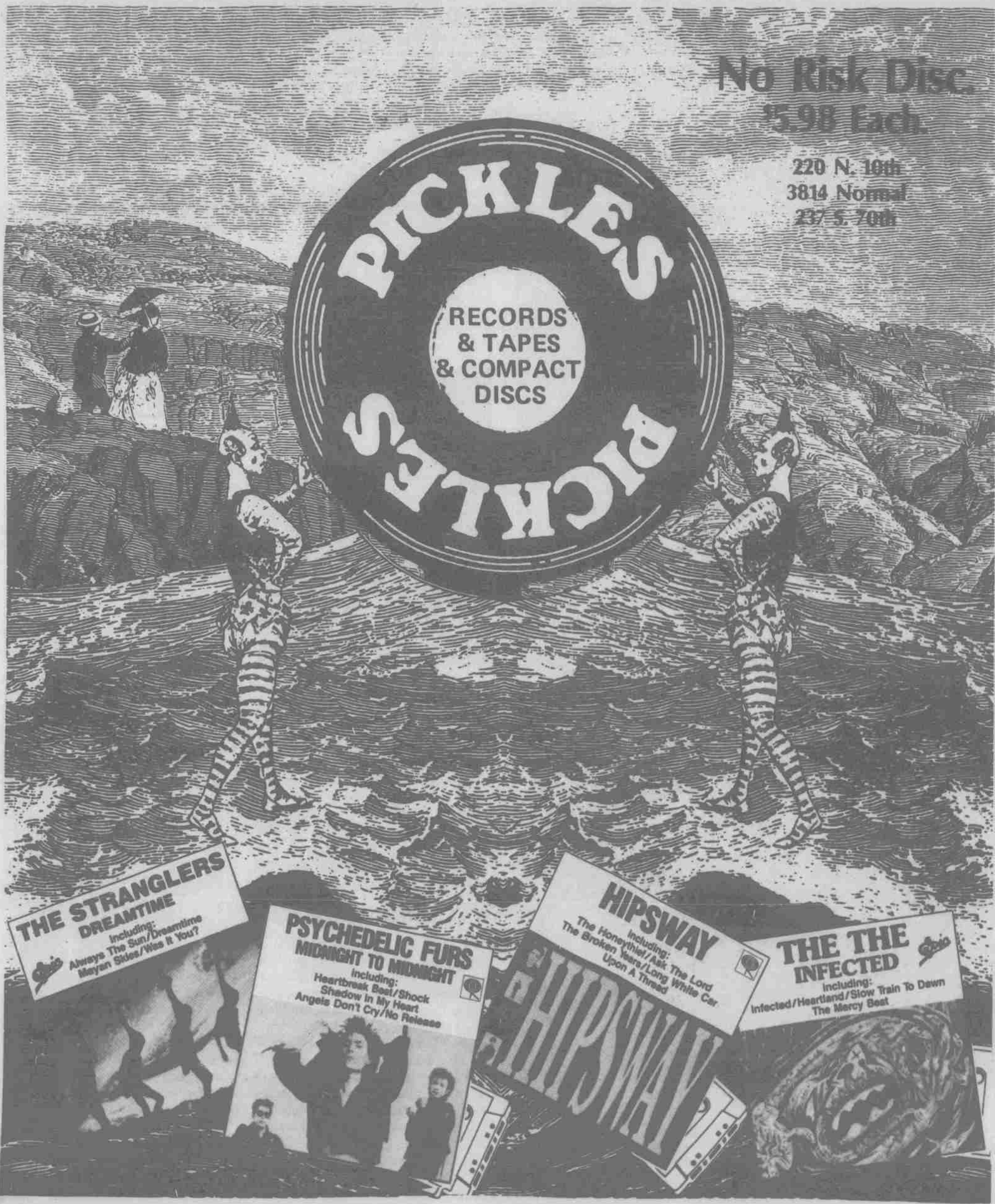
Whether he makes those times or not, Brown will be swimming for Nebraska at the NCAA championships as a member of the 800-yard freestyle relay team.

Brown said being a member of the Nebraska swim team has been an important experience in his life.

"I've gained the ability to have confidence in myself," Brown said. "I've learned to be more competitive. I know I can compete under any circumstances."

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