

Sports

'Hoosiers' principal now UNL professor

By Stew Magnuson
Senior Reporter

Cale Hudson pulled out the yellow, brittle newspaper clippings dated March 20, 1954. In the photo, high-school girls with hornrimmed glasses celebrate with boys in crew cuts and basketball jerseys. Thirty-three years ago this month, the Milan, Ind., High Indians beat a team from school several times its size in the Indiana State High School basketball finals. It was the first and last time a tiny school knocked off a big-city giant. The legendary game inspired the movie "Hoosiers," and Cale Hudson, then Milan High principal, is now a professor of educational administration at UNL.

Unlike Nebraska's high-school basketball tournaments, Indiana doesn't split the teams into divisions based on enrollment. All 721 schools entered in 1954, regardless of how well they played during the regular season. Over three weekends, the 721 teams were eliminated to four.

In 1954, the Milan team, led by second-year coach Marvin Wood, cruised through the sectionals and regionals to face their first large school, an all-black Indianapolis team featuring future National Basketball Association star Oscar Robertson. Milan's Bobby Plump led the Indians to a 65-52 victory and their first trip to the finals. After beating another large team from Terre Haute, they faced Muncie Central High School for the title. Central had won the state championship four times and had twice as many students as there were people in Milan.

Certainly this was the classic Cinderella-Rocky story. Muncie Central's team was taller and bigger, but in the Cinderella fashion, Plump hit a last-second jump shot that won the game 30-28 and earned Milan and Plump a place in history.

To this day, people still talk about the Milan legend.

"People who follow basketball still talk about Milan as a big thing," Hudson said. "Everybody loves the 'little one' to beat the 'big one.' It doesn't happen too often, but when it does,

people remember it a long time."

It was Hudson's first year as a principal. The principal from the year before left with a "nervous breakdown," he said. Hudson's job was to "keep things as normal as possible," which was not an easy task after Milan made it into the finals for the first time and the press started showing up at the school.

"Hoosiers" is based on the Milan experience. The Cinderella story of the fictional town of Hickory is the same, but the story is fiction, Hudson said.

"First of all, the principal was a lot better-looking, and he didn't have any heart attacks," Hudson joked.

Coach Marvin Wood was also quite different from the character played by Gene Hackman, Hudson said.

"Wood was very soft-spoken," he said. "I don't think he ever said a curse word in his life. He was a church-going person and a real disciplinarian. He once suspended some kids for missing a curfew by five minutes and he never had any of (Hackman's) problems."

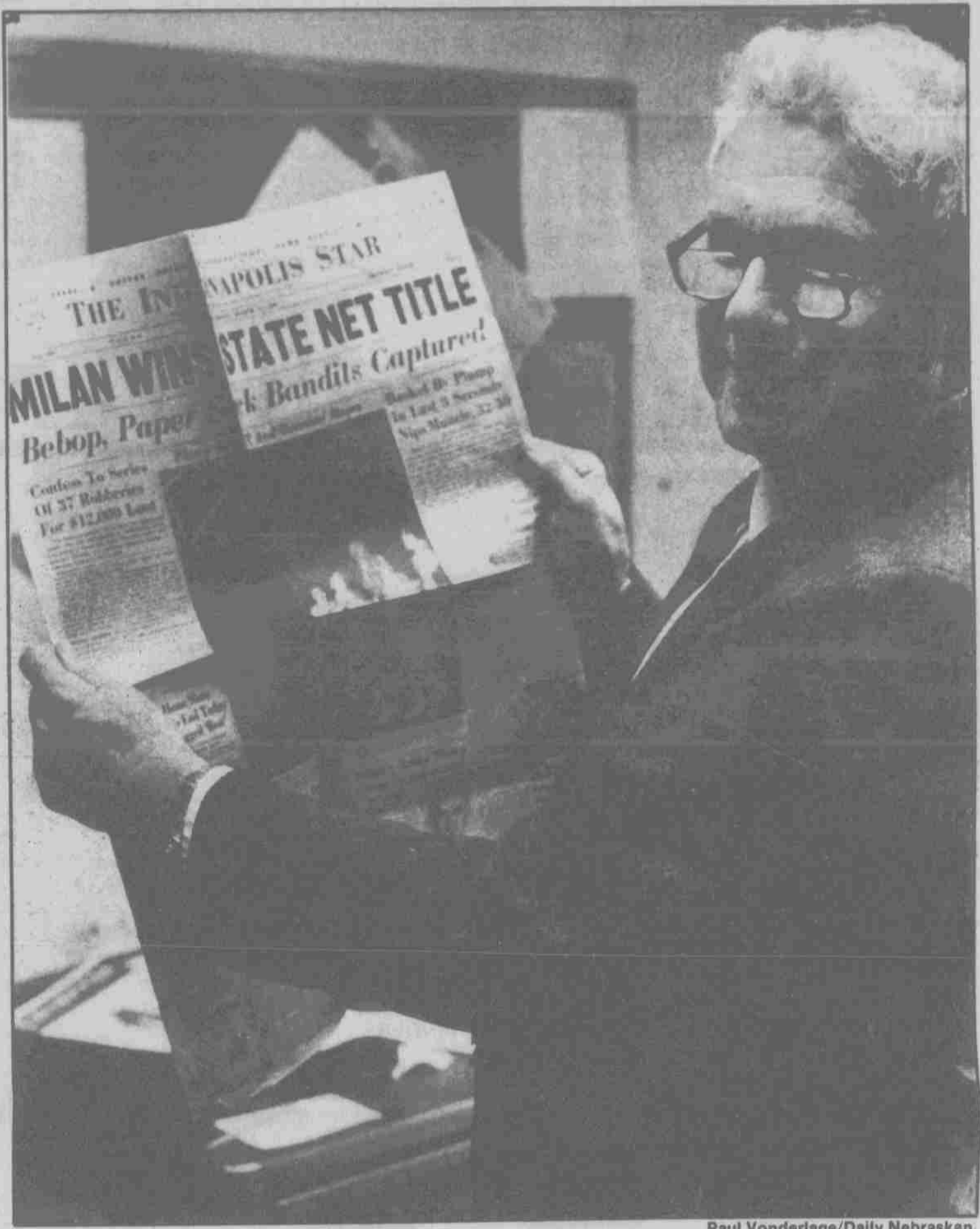
The movie scriptwriters also made the Milan team look like more of an underdog than it was. The kids were awestruck as they entered Butler Auditorium in the movie. All but one of the players, however, had competed in seven games there the year before, and Wood had played college ball at Butler University.

"They were all seasoned players by that second year," Hudson said. "It was nice to say they were 'country hicks' all awestruck, but actually, they were a pretty sophisticated bunch of young men. They weren't as corn pone as the movie made them out to be."

"Hoosiers" captured the basketball fever and intensity well, Hudson said, and he thought the film was "very entertaining."

Hudson hasn't seen Wood or the players since a reunion in the late 50s. He is invited every year to a get-together one week after the Indiana State Basketball Tournament, but he never has had time to go back.

Hudson also was invited to the premiere of "Hoosiers" in Indianapolis but couldn't make it to that, either.



Paul Vonderlage/Daily Nebraskan

Cale Hudson, the former principal of Milan, Ind., High School, looks through newspaper clippings from March 20, 1954, the day after the Milan Indians defeated Muncie Central High School in the finals of the Indiana State Boy's Basketball Championships. The game was the inspiration for the movie "Hoosiers," which is playing in theaters all over the country. Hudson is now a professor of educational administration at UNL.

Jumper has high hopes

By Mark Derowitsch
Staff Reporter

One might say that it is by accident that Nebraska women's track team has its top high jumper.

Tammy Thurman, a junior from Fremont, was originally a long jumper when she was in eighth grade. Until she wandered over to where some of her teammates were high jumping, that is. From that point on, the long jump has been long forgotten.



Thurman

"I was a long jumper, but one day I was messing around and I went over to the pit and started high jumping for the fun of it," Thurman said. "I just started doing it. I had no form or anything, so I just did what I had to do to get over the bar."

The "accident," which occurred almost seven years ago, proved to be a big plus for the Huskers. Thurman qualified as a freshman and sophomore for

the NCAA outdoor championships and the national indoor meet last season. But she failed to place at nationals either year.

This season, Thurman qualified for nationals during the first meet of the season. She tied her own Big Eight Conference record in the meet by clearing 6-0 1/2.

Nebraska assistant coach Bob Cervinka said Thurman will do well this year at nationals.

"She qualified the first meet of the year by jumping 6-0 1/2," Cervinka said. "And at nationals this year, the starting height will be 5-11 1/4, so odds are that she will place. The object is to get to the national meet. Once you get there, anything can happen."

Thurman said she was surprised that she qualified so early for the NCAAAs.

"Over Christmas I still didn't have an approach," Thurman said. "I was kind of in a state of panic because I thought I wasn't going to get it all straightened out for our first meet. Even going into that meet, I still wasn't feeling really confident with my approach at all. I was surprised, that's the only way I can put it."

Even though Thurman failed to place in her first two attempts at the NCAAAs, she is optimistic that she can place this season.

"It's possible that I will place since there doesn't seem to be very many jumpers this year," Thurman said. "Usually they have prelims and finals, but this year they just have the finals."

"My goal is to place after no heighting twice," she said.

Thurman, who has one more year of eligibility after this season, said she needs to improve in some areas.

Freshman plans ahead

By Tim Hartmann
Senior Reporter

Dave Droegemueller joined Nebraska's wrestling team this fall with some legitimate credentials.

While in high school in Maple Grove, Minn., he had 100 matches. The coach he trained in the state was a legend, and Droegemueller had learned an excellent wrestling technique. Droegemueller and his high school coach, who had coached high school wrestling since 1940, had a good working relationship and finished with a 100 percent record.

People were amazed that a 19-year-old freshman from a small town had won a Big Eight Conference wrestling coach Tim Neumann.

"He started out the year doing very well, earning a starting spot," Neumann said. "But then he had a number of injuries."

Even though the injuries slowed his progress this season, Neumann said Droegemueller will be outstanding in the future.

"I think he's going to be one of the best wrestlers ever at the University of Nebraska," he said.

Droegemueller posted a 15-7 this season before the injuries set in.

"I got banged up quite a bit this season," Droegemueller said. "I had some cartilage problems in my ribs earlier in the year, and I have had problems with my knee and my ankle. Those are the three injuries that have really been bothering me."

Droegemueller said he tried to come back too soon from some of the injuries.

"I hurt my ankle real bad after Christmas," he said, "and I kept getting back on there and getting banged up."



Droegemueller

When he did wrestle, Droegemueller said, he was pleased with his performance although he sees room for improvement.

"Earlier in the year, when I was on varsity, I think I was doing pretty good," he said. "Definitely not as good as I could be, but I think I was wrestling well earlier in the year."

"I need improvement all over. I probably want to be a little more consistent next year and wrestle better on my feet," Droegemueller said.

During his senior year at Maple Grove High School, Droegemueller was named to the Amateur Wrestling News' High School All-American team. He decided to go to a Division I school, which eliminated the many Division II schools that were recruiting him. He eventually narrowed his choices to Indiana (Bloomington State), West Point Academy and Nebraska.

"Overall, of all the choices I had, it kind of like the program was going to be run real well and the two coaches (Neumann and assistant coach Mike Perry) I had in there right now were looking forward — they weren't just in there to be coaching. They were looking forward. They were going to give me a good education, too."

Droegemueller wrestled at 135 pounds this season, but he said he may move up a weight class in the future.

"For maybe one more year I'll stay (at 135), but if I get any bigger than what I was last year I'd like to move up to 154," he said.

While he is at Nebraska, Droegemueller said, one of his goals is to get a degree, although he has not yet chosen a major.

"I'd like to coach when I get older," he said.

Droegemueller has one other goal. "Wrestling wise, I guess the top goal you can attain is to be national champion, and I suppose that while I'm here I'd like to attain that," he said.