

First NU coach to lead team to title is now Grand Marshal for state games

By Darran Fowler
Senior Editor

Think of the Nebraska women's track program, and 11-straight Big Eight Conference indoor and outdoor championships probably come to mind.

But there was a time when the goal of the women's team was not to win the Big Eight -- just to beat Kearney State.

That was the situation when Carol Frost, who will be the Grand Marshal at the 6th-annual Cornhusker State Games opening ceremonies July 20, became the first official coach of the women's track program in 1976. Before then, it was a club program.

Kearney State had the edge in recruiting the state's best athletes and was dominant, Frost said, and the first two of her four years at Nebraska were spent trying to lure better athletes here to beat the Lady Lopers.

And when Nebraska finally did, it was a big deal, she said.

"The first time we beat Kearney State was really the thing that started swinging Nebraska toward success,"

she said.

So much success that in 1980 Nebraska won its first indoor and outdoor conference titles under Frost, a feat that has not been relinquished since, under now head coach Gary Pepin.

Frost, 45, left Cedar Rapids to study at UNL from 1963 through 1967, majoring in physical education and math. She placed 14th in the discus at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City after being the gold medalist at the 1967 Pan American Games.

While at Nebraska, Frost only competed intramurally. Her training for national and international competition was confidential, she said, because a professor within the physical education department vehemently opposed women competing.

Frost is a member of the Midwest Amateur Athletic Union Hall of Fame in basketball and was invited to the Olympic Trials in that sport, but accepted the invitation to the track and field trials instead.

Frost said she has heard it said that she is the one responsible for having

built the Nebraska women's track program, but "I have always thought it was more timing than anything."

"I would like to take some of the credit for it, but I just happened to be the person there at the right time," she said.

Frost, who now teaches at Grand Island Senior High School and lives in Wood River, said being chosen Grand Marshal came as a surprise, especially since she had not been a head coach for some time. She did serve as an assistant coach for her husband, Larry, in McCook and Texas.

After a two-year hiatus, Frost also plans to defend her two titles in the shot put and discus at the State Games this year. She will compete in the 40 to 45 age group.

Frost said she has not prepared for the Games as much as she should -- only about three weeks -- but still she's throwing the shot about 35 feet.

She's been throwing her specialty, the discus, about 120 feet, "but I would like to throw a little better than that when I get down there," she said.

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