

Lincoln urban rescue team statewide asset

By Lori Robison
Staff Writer

The site looked more like a set of a disaster movie than a place of business when five rescuers from the Lincoln Fire Department arrived.

But the devastation left in the wake of the July 20 sugar-plant blast in Scottsbluff was more horrifying than the cinema — this was real, and a 31-year-old plant-worker was missing.

Seven of the eight silos used for sugar storage simply weren't there anymore.

Their charred remains were strewn about the entire area among

mountains of twisted metal and sugar. The eighth silo, still standing, leaned precariously against the rubble of number seven.

Although the sheer size of the destruction left many at the site overwhelmed, hopes were initially high that Gene Juergens — last believed to be in the area of Silo 7 when the blast occurred — was still alive somewhere beneath the rubble.

It was the job of a special search and rescue team, all specially-trained members of the Lincoln Fire Department, to survey the area and attempt to find and rescue Juergens.

Please see **RESCUE** on 10

Heyns returns from Atlanta

Former NU swimmer offers media a chance to wear medals

By Trevor Parks
Staff Writer

When Penny Heyns left Lincoln for the Summer Olympic Games in Atlanta, few people knew her.

But those who did, knew she was a good swimmer from a football school. What they also knew was that she had a great shot at winning a gold medal.

But when Heyns returned to Lincoln Monday, she was seen as a two-time Olympic Gold medalist, and someone who is one of the most successful athletes in Nebraska's storied athletic history.

On July 21, Heyns won the gold medal in the 100-meter breaststroke. Two days later she struck gold again, this time in the 200-meter breaststroke. With these wins, Heyns became the first woman in Olympic history to win gold in the two events.

It was a far cry from finishing 33rd and 34th at the 1992 Barcelona Games. Heyns took center stage at the Aquatic Center in Atlanta.

She said she was thankful she spent four years (1993-96) swimming at Nebraska.

"Nebraska has done so much for me and I feel that it is so much a part of my success, even more than South Africa," Heyns said. "I feel like I did not only win the gold for South Africa, I won the gold for Nebraska."

Surprisingly, Heyns almost gave up competitive swimming four years ago.

"There's no way I'd even be swimming today if I didn't come to Nebraska," Heyns said. "In 1992, I felt a little disheartened about my swimming. I felt if I would have stayed in South Africa I would have given up swimming and pursued some academic direction."

But Heyns kept her swimming career going, and she wanted to return to Lincoln to show the fruits of her and the University's labor.

Heyns spent two days in Lincoln before returning to Atlanta to be a spectator for the rest of the games on Wednesday. She returns to her native South Africa August 5, and plans to come back to Lincoln in October.

Then she will continue her training for the 1998 World Championships in Perth, Australia, and Heyns wouldn't rule out a chance to compete in the 2000 Sydney Summer Games.

She also has one year of school left before getting a degree in Psychology.

She had a busy two days showing off her newfound necklaces.



Marni Speck/DN

Olympic gold medal winner Penny Heyns stops to talk to Cal Bentz, NU swimming coach, Monday afternoon at the airport. Heyns was returning from Atlanta where she took two gold medals for South Africa in the 100 and 200 meter breaststroke.

Heyns' flight from Chicago was greeted by more than 50 family, friends and teammates at Lincoln Municipal Airport Monday.

Friends held signs that said, "Congrats Penny, You're the Best" and "We're proud of you," while a couple of her teammates lead the singing of "For She's a Jolly Good Fellow."

Passengers from Heyns' flight even stopped to catch a glimpse of the two-time Olympic gold medalist.

"I was wondering who was going to pick me up from the airport," said Heyns of her return to Lincoln. "I know football is so big here, but I didn't know what kind of attention I'd get being a swimmer."

Then on Tuesday she held a press conference, and made members of the media on hand melt when she asked if they wanted to hold her medals.

All this because Heyns beat a 14-year-old American phenom, Amanda Beard, by less than a second in the two races.

In the preliminaries of the 100-meters, Heyns broke her own world record, which she set March 4 at the South African Olympic Trails. She

also set an Olympic record in the finals of the 200.

"I could see her winning one, but the 200-meters was somewhat of a surprise," her former Nebraska coach Cal Bentz said. "That hasn't been the strongest of her two races, but when she took the 200-meters out like she did I knew she was going for it."

Heyns, who has won the only NCAA title in the history of Nebraska swimming — finishing first in the 100-yard breaststroke — agreed, saying that winning two golds was unexpected.

Her wins were the first swimming gold medals for South Africa since Joan Harrison won gold in the 100-meter backstroke in 1952.

The fondest moment of the games for Heyns — not standing on the podium listening to her country's anthem, not beating Beard twice — but the thing she remembers most, is what the Olympics are all about, the social aspects.

"Before the prelims in the 100-breast, Cristine Quance, one of the American girls, and I were running around and taking pictures," Heyns said. "I think all the other competitors thought we were crazy. That's something I'll always remember."

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