

Men's Track



Lavy listens to coach, qualifies for NCAAAs

Erdkamp, Melson make strides for NU

By **SAM MCKEWON**
Senior editor

It wanted to fall. Shane Lavy felt himself hit it on his third and final attempt at the 7-foot, 5-inch height he had raised the bar to in the high jump competition of the 25th Frank Sevigne Husker Invitational.

Clearing 7-5 wasn't about winning. Lavy had already won the meet by clearing 7-3. It was about confidence, putting himself in position for a national title, making a statement.

But the bar wanted to fall. And it flirted with that notion a couple of times. It wobbled. It shuddered.

It stayed. And with it, Lavy secured himself one of 12 NCAA automatic qualifying marks garnered at the Sevigne and earned himself the outstanding performer award of the meet on the men's side.

"I see that bar bounce as I'm going over," Lavy said. "And then I'm standing up, and I yell 'Stay on!' because I'm like, 'Not again.'"

Lavy was referring to a jump he attempted his sophomore season at 7-6½ where the bar did the same thing, but fell off. Ironically, Lavy missed three attempts at 7-6½ after clearing 7-5 on Friday.

NU Track and Field Coach Gary Pepin, who also coaches the jumps, talked to Lavy after his first attempt at 7-5. Get off the ground quicker, Pepin told Lavy. Student listened to teacher.

"That was a real nice adjustment he made," Pepin said. "When he gets to the higher heights, he wasn't getting enough speed to get his body over the bar. But he adjusted to that. That's what separates the great ones from the good ones."

Lavy's performance was marked as the only male to win for the Huskers over the two-day meet, which played out before a two-day crowd of 6,094 at the Bob Devaney Sports Center. NU had let-downs in some events, but some Huskers established personal bests and qualified for the NCAA Championships in others. There were 70 provisional and automatic qualifying marks for the entire meet.

GARY PEPIN
NU track and field head coach

The largest disappointment came the way of NU sprinter Vince Brown, who bowed out of 60-meter finals because of a hamstring injury. Brown was considered one of the favorites for the race.

"It's something that he felt a little from his race the night before," Sprints Coach Billy Maxwell said. "It's better for him not to go if it isn't there."

Brown has already established a NCAA provisional qualifying mark. Both Joe Erdkamp and Jack Melson qualified for the NCAA championships in the 35-pound weight throw and shot put, respectively.

Erdkamp made a throw of 65 feet, which was more impressive considering that his first two throws of the preliminaries were scratches. Erdkamp finished fifth in the competition, which featured the defending national champion and top-ranked thrower in the country.

"It was an OK throw," said Erdkamp, who normally doesn't have problems with scratches. "I was hoping to improve on it in finals, but I didn't."

Melson's throw of 59 feet and 11¼ inches was his best of the season. It was good enough for fourth place, as defending national champion Brad Snyder of South Carolina won the competition.

"Last year, Jack got rattled and he missed the finals by a centimeter or two," Throws Coach Mark Colligan said. "So it was good for him to get that ghost off his shoulder and get in there and beat some guys that had better season marks than he did."

Pepin said he was "slightly disappointed" with NU's performance in the men's triple jump, as Sheldon Hutchinson finished fourth and Keyuo Craver seventh. Ryan Stairs, possibly NU's best triple jumper, was slightly injured, and, while jumping, didn't make the finals.

Other finishes for NU included Tom Hammond with second in the pole vault, Scott Nachtigal, fifth in the pole vault, Brandon Solt, fifth in the 60-meter hurdles and Tony Smith with sixth in the 1-mile run.

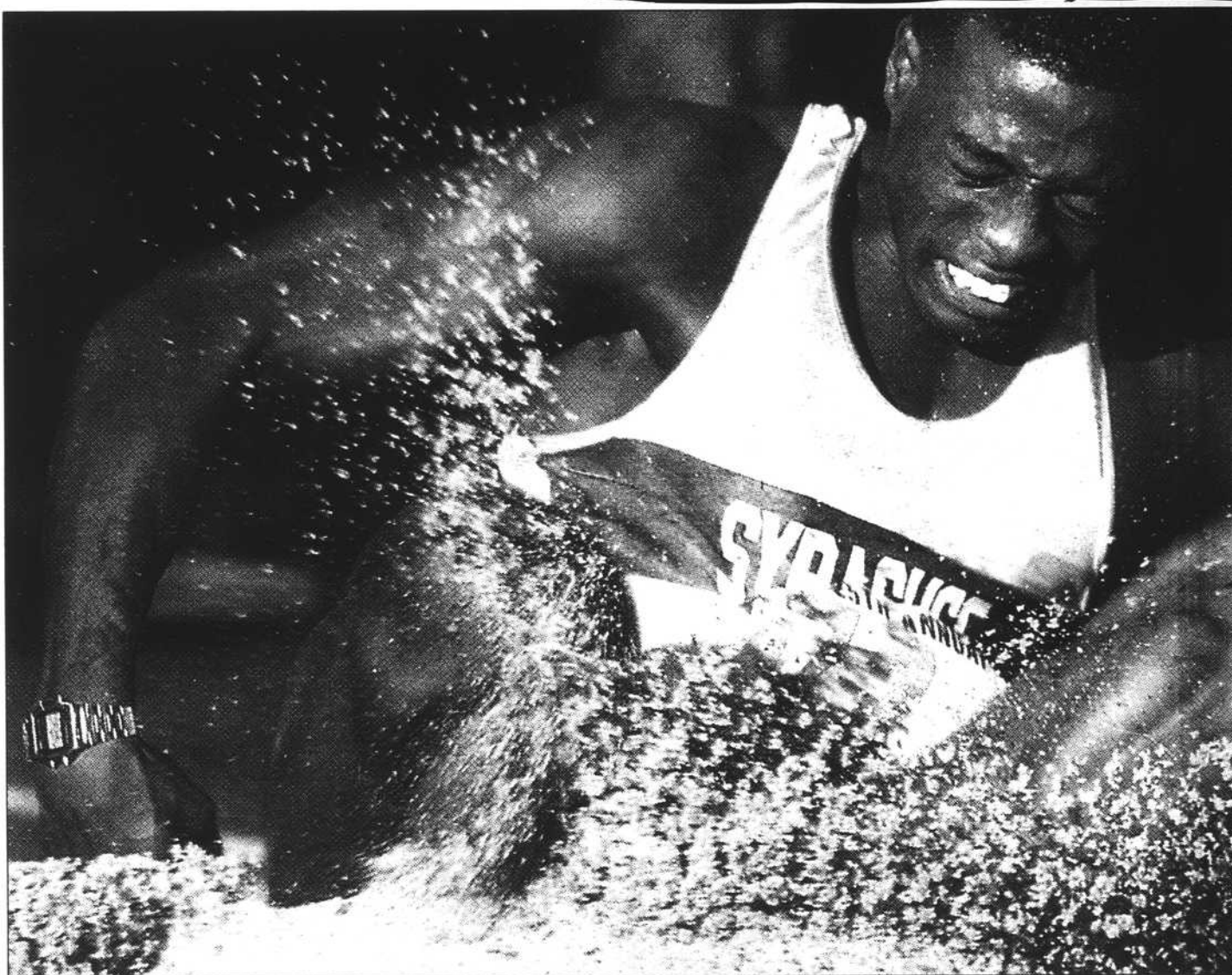
Overall, Pepin said, he was happy with the performances, but didn't like to see any negatives of the meet, of which there were some. He had hoped that everybody could put themselves in position for the Big 12 Championships, to be held Feb. 19-20. Pepin did say he was happy with Lavy's performance, noting it put him in good position for the Big 12 and NCAA meet.

Lavy agreed. "This is where I want to be right now," Lavy said. "It wasn't in the cards for me to make 7-6½ today. God's got bigger plans for me."



PHOTOS BY MATT MILLER/DN
ABOVE: THE GUN SOUNDED loudly and often over two days during the Frank Sevigne Husker Invitational.

RIGHT: KENDRICK CAMPBELL PREPARES himself for the 4x400 meter relay. Something must have worked because Campbell and his teammates from Garden City Community College in Garden City, Kan., placed sixth out of 16 teams in the relay.



LANE HICKENBOTTOM/DN
SYRACUSE TRIPLE JUMPER Samuel Okantey digs into the sand pit during the finals of the Frank Sevigne Husker Invite Saturday at the Devaney Center. Okantey won third-place honors with a distance of 51 feet and 4 inches.