

Record-breaking jumpers soar for NU

■ The Husker track team is in high spirits as it enters its home meet.

BY DIRK CHATELAIN

Kyle Odvody remembers the day the record fell.

The NU high jumper's monumental leap of 7-feet-1½ inches last spring in Plattsmouth was the highest in Nebraska high school history.

"Everything just felt perfect that day," Odvody said. "I told my friends I was going for it. They couldn't believe I did it."

They shouldn't have been surprised.

Odvody cleared the seven foot mark several times last season. That consistency is what made the Wahoo High School graduate one of the top jumpers in Nebraska - he won gold at the state meet with a jump of 7 feet even - and in the nation.

With fellow newcomer Na'Tassia Vice, who has already set a provisional mark for the NCAAs, both the men's and women's Nebraska track teams have a high jump tandem that hopes to be soaring to new heights for the next four years.

NU Coach Gary Pepin looks for the jumpers to continue their early success as his team hosts its first meet on the Devaney Center's new indoor track.

"They're both good competitors," said Pepin. "They have the potential to be good high jumpers at the collegiate level."

Vice, who won the first two meets of the season, hasn't found a problem with the transition to Division I competition. Her season high jump of 5-feet-9¾ inches places her sixth in the nation. The native of Mesquite, Texas, whose personal best is 5-feet-10½ inches, isn't satisfied, though.

"I hope to keep improving," Vice said. "It was only my second meet. Jumping well at the Big 12's is what's important."

Pepin echoed those thoughts, saying it's still early in the game.

"What really counts is where you are

when the season's over," said Pepin.

In order to be where the duo wants to be at the end of the year, some technique changes are needed, Pepin said. Seeing positive results may take time.

"They're trying to make technical changes and jump high at the same time," Pepin said. "The two don't go together very well, but they're working hard."

Odvody, Vice and the rest of the Huskers will face Colorado, Kansas State and Abilene Christian starting at 3 p.m. Saturday. Pepin expects for a challenge at the quadrangular.

"Our kids are really looking forward to being at home on the new facility," said Pepin. "And I think it'll be a fun team meet."

Women to battle Cyclones

BY JEFF SHELDON

Nebraska women's basketball Coach Paul Sanderford called his team's Jan. 13 loss at Iowa State "embarrassing" and "deflating." Senior center Casey Leonhardt used the word "disappointing." The 89-46 loss was the worst in school history.

Hard to find a bright spot in the notion of a rematch with the Cyclones only three weeks later.

Then again, they say it only takes a spark to get a fire going. The Huskers may have found the flicker they needed when they ended a five-game skid by winning 73-62 on the road at Kansas, on Wednesday night.

"Our game Wednesday night was a big boost for us," Leonhardt said. "We came out with lots of energy, and we need to carry that same effort over into the weekend."

However, they will have to heat up in a hurry in order to run with No. 7 Iowa State (17-2, 7-1 Big 12) on Sunday at 2:05 p.m.

ISU has had no trouble staying warm this season. The Cyclones are coming off a 73-63 win on Wednesday night at Missouri and have won two straight after dropping their first conference game last week at Baylor. As a team, Iowa State is shooting just under 50 percent from the field in Big 12 games.

One of the reasons for the Cyclones' success is their inside/outside balance with sharp-shooting guards Megan Taylor and Lindsey Wilson, as well as All-Big 12 center Angie Welle. Wilson, a sophomore, dropped in 25 points Wednesday night against Missouri, while the 6-foot-4 Welle is averaging nearly 20 points and 11 rebounds a game in conference play.

"It's kind of one of those things where you decide what your poison is going to be," Sanderford said. "If you double down on Welle, you leave shooters open. If you let Welle play one-on-one, she's shooting 67 or 68 percent from the field."

In order to pull off the upset on Sunday, Sanderford knows that his young team will need to get off to a quick start. In their previous meeting, ISU held a 52-18 advantage at half-time.

"I think it's really important that we don't get down early, either by stopping them from scoring every trip down the floor or by us scoring," he said.

Among the players Sanderford mentioned who need to step up against the Cyclones were Paige Sutton, who scored 11 points and pulled down eight rebounds against Kansas, and freshman K.C. Cowgill, who has averaged 10 points a game but has missed Nebraska's last 12 games with a stress reaction in her left foot. A deadly three-point threat, Cowgill played four minutes against Kansas, but she still was in some pain and only attempted one shot.

OU next NU victim

BY DOUGLAS SHEPPERD III

The Nebraska women's gymnastics team seemingly has nowhere to go but down as they host No. 10 Oklahoma Saturday at the Devaney Sports Center.

Last weekend No. 5 NU reached new heights, scoring 197.025 points, a new school record and the second-best team score in the country this season.

But, scarily for future opponents, the Huskers believe there's still room for improvement.

"We have a really young team with a lot of talent," said freshman Alecia Ingram. "If we keep performing like we have, we can break the record we have just set."

Ingram has led the team in the early going, bursting out of the gate this season to win the all-around title in four of NU's first five events.

The Husker freshmen success hasn't stopped with Ingram. Gina Bruce stepped in for an injured Bree Dority O'Callaghan and finished second in the all-around against Missouri, behind only Ingram. Bruce said the confidence she gained at Missouri would help her the rest of the season.

Amidst NU's freshmen excellence, last year's freshman sensation A.J. Lamb is busy trying to get back to full strength.

The All-American competed for the first time all season against Missouri, returning from a back injury that had sidelined her for NU's early-season schedule. Lamb gave NU a boost against Mizzou by placing second on the balance beam.

"It feels great to be able to compete again," Lamb said. "I'm glad that I can contribute to the team. Hopefully we can hit 24 out of 24 routines again and score high as a team. I know we can do it again."

NU's home crowd certainly won't hurt the possibility of another school record.

Coach Dan Kendig is very happy to be competing in Lincoln after three away meets.

"This is our house, and we will be ready to compete in front of a home crowd. The bigger the

Please see GYM on 9

Game against Colorado could make or break NU

BY BRIAN CHRISTOPHERSON

Nebraska senior center Kimani Ffriend wants to make sure that everyone within earshot knows exactly how important Saturday's home game against Colorado is to NU's season.

"This is a very, very - let me stress this - very important game," Ffriend said after Thursday's practice. "To protect the home court and win this one against Colorado puts us in a position to do some things."

Nebraska has a bounce in its step right now, fresh off a 63-61 road victory over Kansas State that raised Nebraska's record to 10-10, 3-4 in the Big 12.

Colorado is in the opposite position, coming off a home loss to Iowa State on Wednesday that dropped the Buffaloes' record to 13-8, 3-5.

CU's mediocre conference record makes no matter to Nebraska.

"Every night you come out, you got to be ready to play," Nebraska senior forward Steffon Bradford said. "We got to look at every team as a Kansas or a big rivalry."

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Amanda Cleveland has battled through aplastic anemia, a rare blood disorder that made her gravely ill, to return to the Nebraska women's basketball team.

Amanda's story

Miraculous victory over disease puts UNL player back on the court

story by John Gaskins

It was no way to ring in the New Year. Just after Jan. 1, 1998, Sidney Cleveland left work to pick up his 18-year-old daughter, Amanda, at their suburban Dallas home.

Like he did three days a week, Sidney was to take Amanda to the Kaiser Medical Clinic in Dallas to get treatment for her aplastic anemia - a rare blood disorder that took her off the basketball court and kept her home at all times, with barely enough energy to make it from her bed to the bathroom.

This time, she didn't make it.

"I was heading to the bathroom, I was really

dizzy, and I started seeing dots and stars," Amanda Cleveland said.

"I made it to the bathroom and just sat there and said, 'Lord, I'm not going to make it to my room to change (clothes).' I got up and took three or four steps out of the bathroom, and I just collapsed."

Minutes later, Sidney Cleveland found his daughter passed out on the floor.

It had been just a month since Sidney Cleveland saw Amanda running up and down the floor for the Nebraska women's basketball team as a freshman with a bright future.

Now he was begging for his daughter's life. "I thought that really was the end," Cleveland said. "That was probably the scariest time of the whole ordeal."

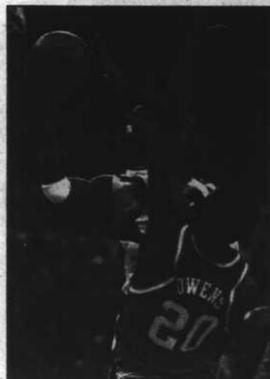
Ordeal is far too weak of a word to describe what Amanda Cleveland has gone through in the last three years.

She was strapped to tubes and IVs in an isolation ward for weeks where her own parents couldn't touch her. She had pumps strapped to her body with a catheter that regulated blood to her heart. She waited months to go outdoors; she had to wear a mask once she did.

Her body literally broke down from the medication, and she started to write her own will.

Least importantly, but still painful, she lost the conditioning and skills that made her such a threat on the court.

And somehow, through tears, undying love and support from family, teammates and friends, and an extreme courage to not only survive, but to bring humor and warmth to everyone around her, Cleveland finds herself running



Kimani Ffriend says that a win against Colorado is essential for the Huskers' postseason hopes.

Colorado does possess some weapons, led by junior forward D.J. Harrison and senior forward Jamahl Mosley, who are averaging 17.1 and 13.0 points per game, respectively.

"They're athletic, with good

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