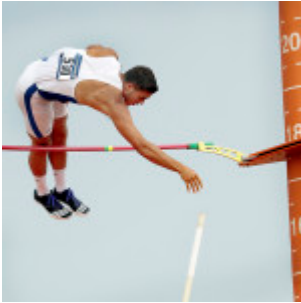


Albright reaches new heights at Kansas



University of Kansas junior Jake Albright clears his personal best of 17 feet, 6.5 inches in the pole vault during the regional meet on May 30 in Texas. The Louisburg High School graduate finished 10th nationally in the pole vault on June 10 in Eugene, Ore.

Photo courtesy of Jeff Jacobsen/KAI

LAWRENCE — During his time at the University of Kansas, Jake Albright has had the chance to soar through the air with some of the best pole vaulters in the nation.

Now, after finishing his junior season, Albright has put himself in that elite group.

At the NCAA Outdoor Track and Field Championships in Eugene, Ore., Albright cleared 17 feet, 4.5 inches to finish 10th in the nation at the historic Hayward Field track on June 10.

Albright, along with his Jayhawk teammate Nick Meyer, who finished 13th, made Kansas history. It was the first time since 1989 that two Jayhawks finished in the top 15 in the nation in the pole vault.

“I am very happy with my performance,” Albright said. “To get 10th place was an awesome experience, no doubt. As with many

things, once you attain it you always want more. In a sport like the pole vault, it is hard to be completely satisfied, though, because you are always striving for that next height, or a higher place in the meet.”

Albright’s finish also gave him some postseason honors as well. The 2012 Louisburg High School graduate earned Second Team All-America honors after placing in Eugene.

“Competing at the NCAA Championships has been a goal of mine since I came to KU,” Albright said. “It was an amazing experience to fulfill that goal by advancing to Eugene, Ore., this year. There is no better place to have the championships than Hayward Field. The facility is amazing and the crowd that the meet brings in is excellent.

“I was definitely nervous before competing, but it was a good kind of nervous. I was excited to compete with top notch vaulters, and see how I could perform. Having my teammate Nick Meyer at the meet competing beside me helped calm me down as well. I can’t forget my coach, Tom Hays. He is always there keeping me in check. I couldn’t have asked for a better opportunity.”

For his first appearance at nationals, Albright didn’t seem too nervous as he vaulted with confidence from the very beginning. He needed just two attempts to clear his first two heights before coming up short in his attempt at 17-8.5.

Just two weeks prior to nationals, Albright put together his best performance of his career. He qualified for nationals in the pole vault on May 30 at the regional meet in Austin, Texas, and did so in a pressure packed situation.

On his final attempt, the Kansas junior cleared 17 feet, 6.5 inches to earn a spot in the national meet. The clearance was also a personal-best for Albright.

Of course it always hasn’t been smooth sailing for Albright.

Like any college athlete, he has hit his bumps in the road and it came earlier this season.

At the end of the indoor season, Albright and his coach were working on a longer approach and the new way didn't exactly suit him.

"The outdoor season started off kind of shaky," Albright said. "I wasn't quite used to the new approach by the time we started going to meets. I performed subpar in a couple early meets before I went back to the slightly shorter approach. I started jumping better in the latter half of outdoor season and I realized I made a qualifying mark for regionals, and I had a shot at making it to Oregon.

"Things came together just in time for regionals. With lots of help from coach Hays, I feel I have progressed considerably. My approach is getting better each year and I hope to nail down the longer approach soon."

Albright will get another crack at the national meet next season as he enters his senior campaign. He has enjoyed his experience on the Jayhawk track team and he hopes to soar to new heights next year.

"So far my experiences at KU have been great," Albright said. "The campus is amazing, and is always being added on to. Student life at KU can't be beat by many universities. As for track, the panel of coaches we have is one of the best in the nation, in my opinion. I couldn't ask for better guidance and instruction.

"The NCAA championship meet has me excited for the next season more than I ever have been before. There is plenty of work to do until next year, and I am going work my hardest to make it back to Eugene."