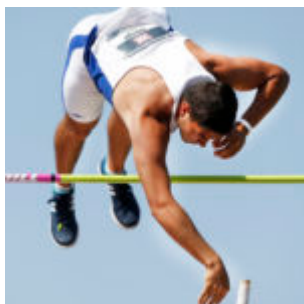


Albright soars atop pole vault rankings



Kansas senior Jake Albright set a new personal best in the pole vault after he cleared 18 feet, 2 inches during a meet on Jan. 21 in Lexington, Ky. Albright's mark put him at No. 1 in the NCAA pole vault rankings at the time.

LAWRENCE – Jake Albright took off down the runway, planted his pole and vaulted into the air.

As he cleared his personal best mark, Albright nonchalantly grabbed his pole and went to talk to his coach. Sitting from afar, you couldn't tell that the University of Kansas senior had set a career best, much less the best mark in the nation.

During the Rod McCravy Memorial on Jan. 21 in Lexington, Ky., Albright cleared 5.54m (18 feet, 2 inches) to finish first – and in the process – soared atop the NCAA Division I pole vault leaderboard and is currently 15th on the 2017 world list.

That mark earned Albright the Big 12 Conference Men's Track and Field Athlete of the Week honor as the Louisburg High School graduate is off to a great start in his final season with the Jayhawks.

"I have never really had much of an external reaction when I clear a personal best," Albright said. "When I made 5.54m I clapped twice, picked up my pole, and walked over to my coach

to talk about the next bar. Inside I felt very excited, but I had to get ready to attempt the next height of 5.62m. I knew I could accomplish this indoors, but I was surprised it was this early.”

Albright was a little stunned due to the fact he was dealing with an illness for nearly a month. He was diagnosed with mononucleosis over Christmas break and it lasted from early December to early this month.



Laura Jacobsen / University of Kansas Jake Albright currently holds the fourth-highest pole vault mark in Jayhawk history.

Apparently it takes more than that to slow Albright down as this was the second time in seven days that he cleared 18 feet and claimed his third victory of the season. It was also the fourth-best mark in Jayhawk history.

“The vaulters did extremely well, but Jake was unbelievable,” Jayhawk coach Stanley Redwine said in a release. “It just seemed like he could do no wrong and I’m excited to see what he’s going to do the rest of this year because he’s only going to continue to get better.”

Albright needed seven tries to get over his first four bars of the competition before needing all three attempts to push past a new career best of 5.54.

“It feels great, but that may easily change,” Albright said of the No. 1 ranking. “There are some guys that I know can jump 5.54m-plus this indoor season, including some of my teammates. I am just excited that the 5.54m mark will most likely get me to the Indoor National Championships where I can compete against the best in the NCAA.”

On Jan. 29, Albright was knocked off the No. 1 spot by a half-inch by South Dakota freshman Chris Nilsen, but Albright is still excited for what the future holds as the Jayhawk men are currently No. 11 in the NCAA Division I rankings.

The Jayhawk senior has already established himself as one top vaulters – not only in the Big 12 Conference – but in the NCAA as well.

Albright won the Big 12 pole vault title during the outdoor season last May after he cleared 18-0.5 and has experience on the big stage as he finished 10th in the NCAA Division I Outdoor Championships in 2015.

“I won conference because my teammates were jumping so well at that meet,” Albright said. “They had many first attempt clearances, so in order to win I had to jump a higher bar. It feels great to compete with such a great pole vaulting squad that we have at KU. Conference was a large confidence boost, and I definitely worked harder after that.”

Following the conference meet in May, Albright competed in the

Division I West Preliminary, but didn't record a mark and was unable to get back to the NCAA Championships. That feeling stuck with Albright in the offseason and he, and the rest of his teammates, are ready to make amends this year in both seasons.

"In the West prelim, it just came down to pole selection," Albright said. "I was trying to use bigger poles than I should have, and ended up coming up shallow in the pit each time. With all the potential we had it was hard not seeing any KU vaulters qualify for outdoor NCAA's last year. We are definitely back with a chip on our shoulder."