

Sports

Joni Huntley surges ahead

By Joe Arndt
Of the Emerald

Joni Huntley may not be a household name unless, perhaps, you come from the home in which I was raised. On my homefront, she's referred to as simply "Joni."

First of all, let me say that interviewing one's cousin is not a simple task. There was more than one instance when the 29-year-old redhead almost rolled her eyes, saying, "This is weird. You're asking me serious questions, and we rarely even get the chance to talk."

She was right. Huntley was in Eugene for Saturday's Chris Brathwaite Memorial track and field meet. She headed a four-woman field in the high jump. Huntley, a 1976 Olympian and 1984 bronze medalist, currently is beginning her quest for another Olympic appearance in Seoul, South Korea, in 1988.

Huntley was raised in Sheridan. It was in this small rural town where, as a child, she received her first high jumping experiences leaping into piles of freshly raked leaves.

And it's in this same town where the high school now has an asphalt track and a grandstand named after her.

Since her first national competition in Frederick, Md., in 1972, Huntley's career has been highlighted with the frequent successes and sometimes the disappointments that all athletes experience.

"Today I didn't jump too well," Huntley admitted after completing her Brathwaite meet appearance. "This is one of the few times I've jumped here that it hasn't been wet. I've never done too well here."

But Huntley's not one to complain. This is only her third meet of the season, and she's just beginning to hit her stride in yet another season of a lengthy and rewarding career.

Huntley now has entered her familiar pattern in training for the Olympic games — she takes two years off from serious training and competition following the games, then gears up before the next scheduled Olympics.

"It's a pattern that's good for me," Huntley said. "Mentally and physically, I need that break."

Huntley has been recognized as one of the finest woman high jumpers in the United States. Among her amateur achievements, she was the first American woman to clear six feet in her event. Her own personal best in the event is six feet, five and a half inches.

A graduate of Oregon State University, Huntley currently is working on a Ph.D. in urban

studies/gerontology at Portland State University where her husband, John Reuter, is a science professor.

Next year she plans to move to Santa Cruz, Calif., for training with her coach Dave Rodda, with whom she has worked since 1973. Reuter,

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scheduled for a one-year sabbatical from PSU, will accompany her.

It is in southern California where Joni will renew her Olympic training.

Huntley has competed internationally for nearly 15 years. The international competition in Japan and Europe, for example, is what she finds both challenging and stressful.

"Sometimes I'd rather not go," Huntley said with a shrug. "Of course, the competition is good — you're jumping against the very best. And I've done well in peaking for big meets."

Huntley said the drawback to overseas competition is that the schedule is often compressed with many meets packed in a short season. This is a problem if your high-jumping career, though highlighted by the bronze medal in Los Angeles, has been marred by four foot operations.

But right now, the hope of jumping in Seoul in 1988 looms before her.

"It's time now to get working on my base," or her right foot plant at the point of approach to the bar. "It's in this meet and the upcoming TACs (The Athletic Congress track and field championships) that I want to make strides toward another (Olympic) games," Huntley said.

TACs will be held at Hayward Field June 19-21. What keeps Huntley high jumping after all these years when she's already fared so well for so long?

"I've continued jumping because I want to do the most that's physically possible. I want to do my best," Huntley said. "I'm really out there representing myself. I try not to get caught up in putting pressure on myself when competing for the country. It's just that when I'm overseas, I happen to have a USA outfit on."

"For me, it's not until afterward that I really think about representing the United States."

Blazers replace Ramsay

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP)—Mike Schuler was named to replace Jack Ramsay as coach of Portland Trail Blazers Wednesday and said the team has enough talent to challenge the Los Angeles Lakers for the Pacific Division title.

"I believe that with the two (first-round) draft picks, if the Portland players want to win their division, we will have every opportunity to do so,"

Schuler said at a news conference.

Schuler, assistant to Don Nelson at Milwaukee for the past three seasons, becomes the sixth Portland head coach in the 16-year history of the NBA franchise.

"Having the opportunity to coach the Portland Trail Blazers is the biggest and greatest thing that's ever happened to me," he said. "No team in the NBA will

be better prepared than our team and no team in the NBA will play harder than our team."

The 45-year-old Schuler said the Trail Blazers are "a very gifted offensive team," and his first priority will be to improve the team's defense.

"Championships are won by being an outstanding defensive

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