

# A Page for the Record

EVENT	PLACE	EVENT	PLACE	TIDERS
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400M	...	400M	...	...
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Although Page won both the Texas and Drake relays with jumps of 7-3, his success outdoors has been slower coming. There's probably one simple reason for that: Page never practices outdoors. He never jumps at the pit on the north end of the Faurot Field track.

Well, actually Page worked at it for a few days this spring when the Tigers prepared for a dual meet with Kansas State, but otherwise he and that high jump pit are complete strangers. Coach Bob Teel doesn't mind. He realizes that if there's any one thing that *really* is hazardous to the health of Nat Page, it's Missouri's antiquated high jump pit.

In the dual meet with Kansas State, Page as usual won the high jump. But it was far from easy, particularly because Page, like most modern jumpers, is a flopper. That is, Page crosses the bar on his back — in the style created about 15 years ago by former Oregon State jumper Dick Fosbury — rather than straddling the bar. Floppers require more running room than do straddlers. In the case of Page, it means a 64-step approach, which at Faurot Field begins in the north end zone where the big "MIZZOU" was painted last year on the grass.

On that day when Page jumped against K-State, his approach started on the grass and then took him north across: (1) the pole vault runway; (2) another strip of grass; (3) a gravel-covered area in which bleachers are installed for the football season; (4) onto the asphalt high jump apron, and, finally, (5) onto a rubberized mat immediately in front of the pit. To avoid running through the gravel, Page covered the area with wooden platforms, but K-State's jumpers took one look at the set-up and exercised their option of moving the event into the Hearnese building.

The worst aspect of the high jump pit, according to Teel, is the asphalt "apron" or runway. It's too small and too hard. "The blacktop is as slick as a tabletop, and it's so hard your spikes won't hold on it," says Teel. "I'm really surprised Nat hasn't slipped on it while making his approach."

Equally as surprising to Teel is the fact that Page even decided to attend school with an outdoor facility like Missouri's.

After all, it wasn't as though Page's high school career had gone unnoticed. While attending Evanston Township High in the Chicago suburb of Evanston, Ill., Page twice won the Illinois high school championship. Not only that, in his junior year he placed third in the triple jump.

Suffice to say that the recruiters' cards and letters poured in.

But it just so happened that one of Page's closest friends, teammates and neighbors was Joe Stewart — the same Joe Stewart who plays in the backfield for Al Onofrio. When Stewart first dropped by Columbia to visit the Campus, he brought along his good buddy. Page had a year of high school remaining. Nonetheless, he was impressed.

"I think," says Teel, "that in all honesty I can say a major factor in getting Nat was Joe Stewart. At least it was a very low-key recruiting effort. I never even got to see Nat in high school."

Although Page doesn't like Mizzou's outdoor facilities, the Hearnese indoor accommodations captured his fancy. "It really struck me," he says. "besides, I like indoor track, and Missouri isn't such a bad place to be compared to Chicago. The outdoor track didn't bother me. With our schedule, we're hardly ever here for a meet anyway. But if we were, I might never get off a good jump."

Page isn't waiting for the Tigers to get a new pit. But he would like to clear 7-4 or 7-5, regardless of where the Tigers compete.

"Only nine guys have gone 7-5 or higher. Once you get up there, a height like 7-2 looks easy."

Teel believes the prospects for such a jump are excellent.

"When a lot of guys get up to the big heights," the Missouri coach says, "they try too hard and their form starts to disintegrate. Now that hasn't been true with Nat. He may anticipate a height and have trouble on occasion, but only once can I recall seeing him have a bad jump at a height he missed."

He's a 7-5 jumper, and better, I'll tell you," says Teel. "Any time now he's going to go. When it'll come, I don't know." The only problem might stem from the fact that Nat's getting antsy. Teel's noticed it, and so has Page himself. "Nat is still like a young colt," says the coach. "We were at one meet where he had to wait around and wait around. By the time they were ready to jump he could've jumped through the roof. But, an awful lot of high jumpers are like sprinters: they're high-strung and they do wacky things sometimes. Nat really isn't like that. He doesn't let things bother him too much. He'd run across inner tubes on his approach to the high jump if he had to, and some of the things he's had to do are almost like that. He can adjust to different situations; he's easily coached; and he's a natural athlete. He could be good at anything he wanted to try."

One of the things Page has in mind is the 1980 U.S. Olympic team. "Even to make the team as an alternate would be great," he says. "I'd *love* to make that team."

And then, sometime, in a small meet somewhere — maybe a dual one — Nat wants to switch roles for a day. Maybe forget about high jumping and try a few other events. He already runs the hurdles — in fact was a member of the Tiger quartet that won the shuttle-hurdle relay at Drake this spring. "But I wouldn't mind trying the long jump or triple jump," he says. "Might run a sprint race, too. I probably won't get the chance, but I think I could do it." □