

Jacobus falling in love with decathlon

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DES MOINES - Derek Jacobus was a four-sport athlete during his days at Kennedy High School, but that was child's play compared to what he's doing now.

Jacobus has become a decathlete in his first year at the University of Northern Iowa, which means he has to concentrate on 10 different events at the same time.

He competed in his first decathlon Wednesday and Thursday at the Drake Relays and finished a respectable 14th out of 25 contestants.

"First ever," he said with a smile, "and I'm competing with All-Americans."

Timauntay Jones, a Cedar Rapids Jefferson grad, placed fifth in the men's 800 meter run Thursday in 1:51.27 for Oklahoma State.

Jacobus was a sprinter, hurdler and a state champion in the long jump at Kennedy, so those parts of the decathlon are fairly comfortable, although the high hurdles in college are a lot higher than the hurdles at the high

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school level.

His biggest learning curve has come in the pole vault, one of his brand-new events. He cleared 12 feet, 5 1/2 inches at Drake, which is good for a beginner.

"It's a blast, but it's kind of a scary event," he said.

The shot put, discus and javelin are brand-new events for him as well. So is the 1500, but he ran a solid 4:38.85 Thursday and finished fifth in the race against the other decathletes.

Jacobus was the most disappointed in the high jump, where he cleared only 5 feet, 7 3/4 inches. He was not a high jumper at Kennedy, but expected better than that.

"That was not good," he said.

"The pole vault will come," he continued. "I'll hit the weight room this summer. The throws will come. And the hurdles."

He plans to stick with the decathlon, but he'll also compete on UNI's 4x400 relay team on Friday and will be a quarter-miler at times as well. He ran the 400 in the decathlon in 49.55, which is a good time for somebody new to the event. It was the fastest 400 in the field.

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"I knew I could break 50. That was my goal," he said.



Jacobus competed in football, basketball, track and baseball at Kennedy and is a gifted all-around athlete, but he never dreamed there was so much to learn about the decathlon.

"There is a lot of science behind it all," he said. "You wouldn't think it would be like that, but there is a lot of science in how to get good throws, good jumps.

"It's not what I thought," he confessed.

It's hard, but a lot of fun. "Oh, yeah," he said. "I love it."

Jones placed second in the 800 meter run at Drake for the Jefferson J-Hawks as a senior in 2013. He began his college career at UNI, but transferred to Oklahoma State after one year.

"It wasn't a good fit for me," he said about Northern Iowa.

Jones chopped 1.2 seconds off his personal-best in the 800 Thursday with his 1:51.27. "I feel good," he said about the clocking. "It's what I came out here to do, to get a P.R."

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Jones would love to crack 1:50 this season, but said scoring points for Oklahoma State in the Big 12 Conference meet is the top priority.

"If 1:49 comes, I'll take that," he said. "That's always a goal. That's a step in the process."