

Buccaneer junior wants to clear 10 feet in pole vault tonight

Friday, May 19, 2000

By Alan Babbitt
The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND HAVEN -- Holle Harjer has cleared the bar in the pole vault to set a school and O-K Red Conference meet record.

She's striving to do even better today.

The Grand Haven junior is competing in the Division 1 regional meet tonight at Houseman Field in Grand Rapids. She comes in as the O-K Red champion, having gone a record-setting 9-feet-6 at the conference meet earlier this week.

"I'm hoping to go higher than 9-6," Harjer said. "The qualifying mark for state is 8-6. I just need to do the little things."

Harjer's goal at regionals is to go four inches higher than she did at the O-K Red meet at Grandville High School.

It's an achievable mark.

"I've said to her all along I'd like to see her hit that 10-foot mark," said Joe Nelson, an assistant coach for Grand Haven who works with Harjer in the pole vault.

"I know some girls in the area are well above that in our division. For her to win it is going to be pretty tough.

"But we want to better ourselves. I think she's pretty capable," he said. "Our first goal is to make state. This is the first year they have additional qualifying standards for girls vault. We want to be able to get there."

Harjer has been doing the pole vault ever since she was a freshman. It was the first year girls were allowed to compete in the event.

"I guess it's just practice makes perfect," Harjer said. "I've worked on a lot of skills like my plant. My run is a lot faster I think. I have more confidence."

Nelson isn't surprised Harjer has steadily gotten better at the pole vault.

An open mind and a desire to compete has enabled her to do so well.

"She's got a couple of qualities that are really good for her," Nelson said. "She's pretty patient. She's a competitor, and she's very, very coachable. That's a good combination to have."

"We work on things, and she's willing to listen to her coach and try to correct it, not think her way is the best way. It's really fun to watch."

Nelson enjoyed watching Harjer compete at the O-K Red meet.

"She competed really, really aggressively," Nelson said. "There were three girls at the end. The other girls went first and went nine feet, 9-3. She was able to meet that challenge and cleared those heights.

"She kept her composure and performed really well."

Harjer said she followed her coach's instructions.

"I just did everything coach told me to do -- run fast, plant high, jump high and not knock the bar down," Harjer said. "I felt really good all the day. I knew it was my day to do my personal best."

</HTML>