

LUCY CORBETT

MOVING AHEAD BY LEAPS AND BOUNDS



What She Did Better Than Anyone In MSU Women's History Is Convert Horizontal Energy Into Vertical Energy.

BY PAUL BURNS

Contemplate this for a minute. Stand up. Now look up two inches. Now three or four more. Keep raising your vision until the horizon is no longer part of the equation. Settle in at a height some six or seven inches taller than you. Now jump over that height. How is that even possible?

High jumpers do it every day, all day. For many, it's a piece of cake, until it isn't. For Lucy Corbett, clearing a bar some six inches higher than she is tall, while a herculean effort, was possible, almost effortless. The former Montana State track standout stands about 5-foot-8 in stocking feet, yet she holds the all-time MSU women's high jump indoor record, having cleared 6-2¼.

Simply put, Corbett defies gravity. Just when Earth thinks it's got a firm grip on her, she leaves the planet to reach new heights. "We don't jump as often as one might think," Corbett sort of explains about her practice regime. Her success comes from a combination of sprints, jumps, approaches, hops, you name it. In a nutshell, what she did better than anyone in MSU women's history is convert horizontal energy into vertical energy. Her approach has to be fast; her foot plant has to be solid, and her leap has to be explosive.

There's also the ability to visualize, and tell herself she'll clear the bar. "The mental component is really important. It's easy to psyche yourself out, especially when I'm staring at the bar. I think it's important to hone in on that composure," Corbett says. "It's kind of a mental challenge to stare down a really high bar."

Of course, being athletic and cerebral are key, but according to MSU jumping coach Dustin Cichosz's web page, it's also "explosive strength and coordination through proper plyometric and bounding techniques, with a focus on approach development through sprint and takeoff mechanics."

That's a mouthful. But it boils down to this: run fast, jump high, arch back. Not all jumpers can excel at that, because it's so much more complex and difficult than simply dunking a basketball. "You need to know what to think about and how to think about it," says Cichosz. "She puts those parts together."

Corbett's skills have made her the most highly decorated jumper in MSU history, male or female. With her eligibility exhausted and a degree in biochemistry under her belt, the All-American leaves the Bobcats with six Big Sky Conference championships, four indoors and two outdoors. She's one of just a handful to ever claim four conference titles. In addition to her indoor record, she also holds the team outdoor mark, at 6-1½. "The biggest thing

I learned is having confidence that I can make certain heights; (that) plays a big role in what I accomplished," Corbett says.

Unfortunately for Corbett, her jumping career came to a sudden halt while competing at the Western Regional Track and Field Championships in Sacramento this past May. Hoping to make her third trip to the NCAA Championships, yet unable to overcome the rust that was inevitable due to resting her tired body while recovering from a spate of injuries, Corbett finished a distant 34th in Sacramento. On the final jump of her Bobcat career, with the bar at 5-9¾, a height she's done in her sleep thousands of times, Corbett banged her head against the standard, one of the two posts that hold the bar. Feeling woozy from the blow, she simply walked away for the last time in her college career. "For a lot of people, it's hard to realize the magnitude of what she's done," Cichosz says.

The problem in Sacramento can be traced back to the outdoor season. Having claimed her fourth Big Sky indoor title in January, Corbett struggled in the outdoor season. A knee injury



in March forced her to miss six weeks of competition, and the nagging back injuries that had plagued her since her days at Bozeman High re-emerged. She rallied late in the season to finish second at the Big Sky meet but was unable to reach the same heights from earlier in her career.

Corbett's success began at Bozeman High, where she burst on the scene as a senior, new to jumping and new to the school. She started her high school career playing soccer in Loomis, Calif., but when her family moved to Montana during the summer after her junior year, she took up jumping, finding she was quite good at it.

As a senior for the Hawks, she finished second at the State AA meet, while also placing in both





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hurdle events as the Bozeman girls took second in the team chase. That's when MSU came calling, offering a chance to continue her track career while earning a degree. "I'm fortunate to have ended up in Montana, having great coaching and being around other really good competitors that were able to push me," Corbett says. She is one of five former

Hawk jumpers who are competing or have recently competed at the NCAA Division I level.

Much more than an athlete, Corbett put her classroom time at MSU to good use. Already working as a nurse aide for Bozeman Health, Corbett relaxed this summer while studying for the MCAT exam, with the goal to be in medical school by the fall of 2024. As a CNA, she's touched the lives of patients dealing with a myriad of symptoms from a sprained ankle or a cold to dementia or cancer. She hopes to work in sports medicine one day.

Her future in the sport is still up in the air. With the Olympics in Paris starting in July 2024, she is giving thought to continue with her training and see how her body feels next spring. If things are promising, she says she will give the world stage a shot. A height of 6'5" is needed to qualify for the Games. That would mean a return to the daily grind it takes to be a champion athlete. During a typical practice, Corbett would warm up, jump, sprint, stretch,

adjust her takeoff points, cool down, then maybe get a massage and acupuncture. Just like that, four or five hours of her day were consumed. "I have to figure out what to do with my free time," Corbett says. She's not in a hurry to leave the jumping pit behind, as her best friends are all Bobcats. "It's weird not doing it, because I've done it for so long."

While track may appear to be a bunch of individuals chasing their own pursuits, Corbett was often cited as a leader on the team. She was known for her enthusiasm toward others' successes, she offered support when it was needed, and routinely performed the mundane tasks of cleaning up the facilities following each practice, ensuring all the equipment was safely and securely stored away. "Lucy is a Bobcat legend," says MSU head coach Lyle Weese. "She has been an incredible teammate, and just amazingly tough."

"I feel lucky to have this as part of my story; it turned out great," Corbett says.

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