

A whole new world for Lancer

Pole vault coach competes on international stage

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NEW BRIGADE—Thousand Oaks High pole vault coach Kevin Burnett, 65, is a World Masters track and field athlete.

Photos by MICHAEL COONS/Acorn Newspapers

TRACK & FIELD /// *Thousand Oaks Lancers*

Eight years ago, Kevin Burnett watched Thousand Oaks High pole vaulters soar over the bar during a track and field practice.

Burnett, a former pole vault record-holder at Hoban High in Akron, Ohio, competed for two seasons at Kent State. He wondered if he still had it in him.

Burnett, then 58, stayed late after a Lancer practice and grabbed a pole.

“I put the bar kind of low and jumped,” the now-65-year-old said. “Sure enough, it was like riding a bicycle. I cleared the bar pretty well, so I put the bar higher. That reignited everything.”

Two years later, Burnett competed at his first National Senior Games in 2013 in Cleveland. He claimed pole vault gold, and he hasn’t stopped trying to raise the bar since.

He’s traveled throughout America competing at masters meets.

“He works out a lot on Sundays by himself,” said Tracy Spencer, head coach of the Thousand Oaks track and field team. “I’m just happy he’s as good as he is.”

In a nutshell

- Kevin Burnett, a Thousand Oaks High track and field assistant coach, is a masters pole vaulter who has competed at meets in the U.S. and internationally.
- Burnett, 65, has helped numerous Lancers soar up the Ventura County rankings this spring.
- Thousand Oaks pole vaulters will be among the hundreds of athletes competing at 3 p.m. today at the Ventura County Track and Field Championships at Moorpark High.

Burnett competed in his first World Masters event in September 2018 in Malaga, Spain. He placed fifth out of the 17 vaulters in his age group (65-69).

“My favorite part was being able to meet all of these top notch vaulters my age from all around the world,” Burnett said of his competitors, who hailed from countries including Germany, Czech Republic, Italy, France and Australia.

Burnett plans on traveling to Albuquerque, N.M., in June to compete in the National Senior Games. He's also looking to vault at the California State Games in July in San Diego.

Before then, the eighth-year Lancer vault coach will help his pole vaulters continue reaching new heights.

Three boys—senior Joseph Lewis and juniors Grant Eller and Quentin Hall—and two girls — senior Seanne Chan and junior Giulia Colella—rank in the top- 10 in Ventura County this spring.

Burnett said his experience as a competitor helps his coaching.

"I can apply everything I learn as a competitor to coaching," he said.

LANCERS sweep to LEAGUE titles

The Thousand Oaks High boys' and girls' track and field teams captured Marmonte League championships this spring.

On the boys' side, Daniel Sarisky, a sophomore, is one of the fastest sprinters in Ventura County. Mitchell Burr, a senior, excels in the 400 and 800. Ryan Tischhauser, a sophomore, thrives in the 300 hurdles. Ethan Bersley, a senior, Michael Mireles, a junior, and Michael Cooper, a sophomore, are among the top 1,600 runners in the area. Quincy Stokes is a junior to watch in the shot put. James Nauert, a junior, competes in the triple jump.

For the girls, Shelby Richmond, a freshman, leads the sprinters. Elise Craft, a sophomore, is one of the top hurdlers in *Acorn* country. Milixa McGraw, a senior, also competes in the hurdles. Amanda Spear, a senior, is a standout thrower. Ireland Nowak, a junior, rules the high jump. Kimberly Bolt, a senior, and Avery Benitez- Fanslow, a junior, represent Thousand Oaks in the long jump and triple jump.



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