

Bybee excels in pole vault at Coe

Written by Kelci de Haas

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Sophomore Laura Bybee knows more about balancing than the average student at Coe College.

Bybee started pole vaulting when she was a freshman at Pecatonica High School in Pecatonica, Ill., and now is on the women's track and field team at Coe, where she has set records in her favorite event.

"I started out in trampoline and tumbling and they always say that people who are in gymnastics are going to be good at it," she said.

When it came time to pick a college Bybee said, "I was looking at schools that I could pole vault at, but I was also looking at schools with a good science program."

Bybee is majoring in Chemistry and Biochemistry, and splitting her time between class and workouts. She said it's been a struggle "finding enough time for training and academics."

She's managed to find a good balance.

"She's incredibly meticulous about her studies. As a freshman she was on the dean's list and in two incredibly difficult programs here at Coe," track coach Aaron Carley said. "It takes a mental toughness to be able to do that and I think that transitions over into the pole vault."

Carley described Bybee as self-motivated as well as consistent. "I think those are some of her biggest attributes that she possesses," he said. "I can always count on Laura to be very accountable for her workouts, for her lifting; the entire scope of the training sequence."

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Bybee was a successful student and athlete in high school.

"I would just describe myself as I'm a really driven person," she said. "If I want something I'm going to try to go get it."

Bybee is aiming to beat the indoor school record at Coe of 10 feet, 2 inches set by Kristen Blodgett in 2010. Bybee set the outdoor school record at 10 feet last year.

Carley does not think the record will hold up very long. "She'll get it," he said. "And she's going to continue to break her own record over the next two and a half years.

"Laura is an incredibly modest person and she needs to give herself more credit for what she does out there," he said, adding she's "a very good leader to have."

Bybee jumped 10 feet to win the pole vault at the Cornell Invitational Jan. 25. She also cleared 9 feet, 10 inches to take third at the Jack Jennett Invitational in Cedar Falls Feb. 1 and finished second at the Grinnell Invitational on Saturday.

"I'm really, really excited to see what she does and pretty honored to be coaching her, so it's fun," said Carley.

Bybee was an all-conference performer in track for four straight years in high school. She qualified for the Illinois state meet as a sophomore, junior and senior and was named the outstanding female athlete in her senior class. She plans to be an agricultural researcher after college.