

Colby College women's rodeo team captures the all-around team title

The women's rodeo team at Colby Community College continues to prove they are the ones to beat in the Central Plains Region.

Coach Allen Russell reported that the women's team had their best showing of the year at the Fort Scott Community College Rodeo held March 7-9. The team finished first overall out of 26 community colleges and universities.

The team was led by Andrea Boettcher, a sophomore from Atkinson, Neb., who was all-around cowgirl for the entire rodeo. In break-away roping she split second in the first round, was second in the short go and finished second in the average. In the goat tying, Boettcher won the first round, was second in the short go, finishing first in the av-

erage.

Jamie Dunn, a freshman from St. Francis, also continued her winning ways by placing seventh in the first round of the goat tying.

"Our women's team has been strong all year, and we finally accomplished what we wanted to at Fort Scott," Russell said. "Andrea single-handedly propelled us into the top five with a superb outing, and Jamie is tough every time out of the box. As always, there is work to do and ways to improve, but we are positioned for an exciting spring."

In addition to Boettcher and Dunn, Maggie Opela, a sophomore from Stapleton, Neb., and Abby Wagaman, a freshman from Emporia, contributed to the team tally with their performances at Kansas State and Fort Scott.

The women's team has climbed to fifth place overall in the Central Plains Regional standings. The women are only 40 points out of fourth and the only community college currently ranked in the region's top ten.

On the men's side, bareback rider Rustin Brooks, a sophomore from Wamego, was fourth in the first round. Branden Ferguson, a sophomore from Lakewood Colo., was third in the first round and finished fourth in the average. Because of their efforts, the men's team finished ninth in the field of 26 teams.

The Central Plains Region is arguably the nation's largest and most competitive collegiate rodeo region. The team competed at the Garden City Community College Rodeo this weekend.

Jeff Graves steps up for Jayhawks

By DOUG TUCKER
AP Sports Writer

LAWRENCE, (AP) — Now when people talk about Jeff Graves having a double-double, they don't mean his chin.

When someone says he came up big, they mean his game and not his waistline.

He'll probably never be skinny. But persistence and hard work have borne spectacular results for the hulking Kansas junior, and he's not lumpy any more, either.

The Jayhawks are back in the Final Four mostly because of the consistent excellence of seniors Kirk Hinrich and Nick Collison. But the Jayhawks would probably have ended their season last weekend if not for 13 points and 15 rebounds against top-seeded Arizona from a guy who just a few months earlier failed to meet his angry coach's minimal conditioning standards.

"Right now I feel like I'm on cloud nine," Graves said Saturday after the Jayhawks beat the Wildcats 78-75 to win their second straight trip to the Final Four.

"If there's a cloud 20, that's where I'd be, too."

When practice began last fall, Graves tipped the scales at 293, about 40 pounds too much for his 6-9 frame. The hulking junior college transfer was so deep in Roy Williams' doghouse the coach refused to talk about him on media day.

"Right now I don't consider Jeff Graves a member of this team," Williams said.

At the time, it didn't seem that important in the overall picture. Williams had no plans for Graves to play a major role even if he did get himself in shape. He was slated to play behind Wayne Simien, a talented, muscular sophomore who's been projected by almost everyone as a future superstar.

But when Simien dislocated his shoulder on Jan. 4, the spotlight and the pressure fell on Graves.

It wasn't easy. Fighting a tendency to foul while still struggling

to get in shape, the Lee's Summit, Mo., native had a few good moments and a few more bad ones.

He seemed to pick up fouls about as quickly as he picked up weight. But slowly, he began to show steady improvement, making more and more contributions as seniors Kirk Hinrich and Nick Collison turned it into a special season for the Jayhawks.

Eventually, his weight dropped to around 255-260 — still a bit portly, but altogether workable.

In six postseason games, he's averaging almost nine points — two points higher than he averaged in the regular season. The 15 rebounds against Arizona in the West Regional finals Saturday were a career-high and the third time he's hit double-digits.

Going to the Final Four, he says, "is what I've dreamed of since coming here from junior college. I think this shows how much heart and dedication I have."

Most importantly, Graves has been able to take some pressure off Collison inside. With Arizona double-teaming the 6-9 senior, Collison was held to just eight points — about 11 under his average.

But Graves was there to take up the slack, and nobody appreciates it

more than his teammates.

"Jeff had his ups and downs this year, but he's a much different person now than when he came into the program," said Kansas guard Michael Lee. "He didn't know what to expect. He's so much more mature."

Against Arizona, he even managed to avoid leaving the floor with four fouls for the first time in five games.

"That's about as well as he's played," said Collison. "He's come so far from when he got here. Now if he can just stay on the floor."

Williams does not deny he was furious last fall when Graves reported so grossly overweight and out of shape.

His conditioning was set back even further when he was a passenger in a car involved in an accident in September. He sustained a concussion and couldn't do much physical activity for two weeks.

With Williams getting more and more impatient, Graves tried seven times to pass the team running test where everyone is required to run six laps around a quarter-mile track in 12 1/2 minutes.

Finally, about the middle of November, he made it. Every other member of the team had done it in September.

K.C. Royals start season with win over Chicago

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — The young Kansas City Royals had been hoping for this kind of start.

Runelvys Hernandez allowed two hits in six innings and rookie Angel Berroa drove in the go-ahead run as the Royals beat the Chicago

White Sox 3-0 Monday — Kansas City's first opening-day win in five years.

Kansas City got key contributions from its rookies: Mike MacDougal pitched a 1-2-3 ninth to complete a three-hitter, designated

hitter Ken Harvey doubled twice and Berroa made a fine defensive play at shortstop in the ninth inning.

"We have a lot of young guys, no doubt about that," Harvey said. "But us young guys have proven ourselves in the minor leagues. Once we get over being in awe of the major leagues, we'll be fine."

Hernandez, given the opening-day start over Jeremy Affeldt by winning a coin flip, struck out five and walked only one.

"I feel so great, so very, very happy about that," said the 24-year-old right-hander, 4-4 last year as a rookie. "They have confidence about me and I don't want to lose that."

Jason Grimsley gave up one hit in two innings, and the sellout crowd stood for MacDougal, who threw a called third strike past Frank Thomas for the second out.

Sports Briefs

TORONTO (AP) — Derek Jeter, the heart and soul of the Yankees, was knocked out of New York's opener with a dislocated left shoulder after a violent collision at third base with Toronto catcher Ken Huckaby.

Jeter will go on the disabled list and be sidelined for at least two weeks, New York manager Joe Torre said after the Yankees' 8-4 win. But the extent of the injury wasn't immediately clear.

Jeter was down for more than 10 minutes, writhing in pain and surrounded by worried teammates. He was helped onto a cart by trainers Gene Monahan and Steve Donohue, strapped in place sitting upright and taken off the field — his head bent, his face dripping with sweat. The shoulder was popped back in place and Jeter was taken to a hospital for X-rays.

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Kirby Puckett denied dragging a woman into a restaurant men's room and groping her, testifying that he had

offered to escort her to the bathroom.

The Hall of Famer gave a markedly different account from that of his accuser on what happened Sept. 5 at Redstone American Grill in suburban Eden Prairie.

The woman testified last week that the former Minnesota Twins star forced her into a men's room stall and grabbed her breast, causing bruises on her breast, arm and ankle.

Puckett is charged with false imprisonment, a felony; fifth-degree criminal sexual conduct, a gross misdemeanor; and fifth-degree assault, a misdemeanor.

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Tennessee is headed to the Final Four again.

The top-seeded Lady Vols advanced to their 14th Final Four by beating No. 2 Villanova 73-49 in the Mideast Regional final. Tennessee will play Duke in the national semifinals in Atlanta on Sunday night.

The top-seeded Blue Devils rallied to beat No. 2 Texas Tech in the Midwest Regional final.

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