



**Pole vault pupil**

STAFF PHOTO BY DAN PARKER

Port Aransas High School senior Drake Sawyer practices pole vaulting at the PAHS track field on Tuesday, April 15, while Des Kidd looks on. Kidd is a former pole vaulter providing private lessons for Sawyer.

# Winning pole vaulter gets help from former stand-outs

BY DAN PARKER  
SOUTH JETTY REPORTER

When Des Kidd heard a year ago that a Port Aransas High School student named Drake Sawyer was working to become a winning pole vaulter, Kidd decided to contact Sawyer and offer him a little coaching on the side.

Kidd didn't know Sawyer, but he still felt a strong urge to help, because he once was a pole vaulter himself. Practitioners of the sport are so few, they belong to a select fraternity.

"Pole vaulting knowledge is so rare," said Kidd, a 44-year-old Port Aransas man who once was one of the top high school pole vaulters in the state. "It's not like there's a ton of people out there who have done it or understand it. ... And it's complicated. There are a lot of things going on in a very short period of time."

Sawyer now has made it through district and area competitions and is poised to compete at a regional meet at Huntsville on Friday and Saturday, April 25-26. If he makes it past regional, he'll go on to state, May 9-10 in Austin.

Sawyer said he's feeling confident he'll make it to state. If he does, it will be thanks to his own hard work, his natural talent and to free instruction he has received not only from Kidd but also from two other pole vaulting enthusiasts who have stepped forward to help in the past.

Maunel Franco of Port Aransas gave Sawyer lessons when he was a freshman and sophomore. Franco never has been a competitive pole vaulter himself, but he learned how when he was in his 20s. He later taught pole vaulting, along with other track and field sports, while working as a coach at various junior high schools and high schools in South Texas. He currently works as a territorial manager for a business that supplies convenience stores.

Eric Miller of Ingleside gave Sawyer lessons when he was a junior. Miller, who is the head girls' track coach at Ingleside High School, was a high school and college pole vaulter in Alabama.

Kidd has been tutoring Sawyer since last year's track season.

PAHS track coach Steve Reaves is not a former pole vaulter, but he works often with Sawyer, helping the student carry out Kidd's instructions,



COURTESY PHOTO

**At state, 27 years ago**

Des Kidd, then an Austin High School student, pole vaults at a state high school track and field meet at Texas Memorial Stadium at the University of Texas at Austin in 1981. Today a Port Aransas resident working as a radiologist, Kidd no longer competes as a pole vaulter, but he's keeping his hands in the game by helping Port Aransas High School senior Drake Sawyer hone pole vaulting skills that could soon land him in the state meet in Austin.

during practices at the high school track field. Reaves said the private instruction from Kidd, Franco and Miller have meant a lot.

"We're extremely appreciative," Reaves said. "They all seemed to have come along at the right time."

Kidd said the most significant lessons he's teaching don't have so much to do with the technical aspects of pole vaulting.

"Most importantly, I'm trying to instill a work ethic," Kidd said. "If you just put in your time, things pay off. Maybe not directly. Maybe not by being the best pole vaulter. But something good will happen. ... Positive things will happen from positive work."

Teaching a person to pole vault isn't a simple thing, because it's not a simple sport, Kidd said.

"You can't tell (the student) what to do from a technical standpoint, because it's all happening so fast," Kidd said. "But, if you practice it and do drills on each segment of the jump, the end result is putting it all together in one quality motion."

Kidd knows a thing or two about putting it all together. In the early 1980s, when he was a student at Austin High School, he twice took second place in state competition. His prowess in the sport won him a full four-year scholarship to Texas A&M University.

Sawyer has some real potential, Kidd said.

"I think he's very gifted, physically," Kidd said. "But that may be a handicap, because in a small town, or a small area where there's no competition, what can drive you to really work hard and overcome things?"

If Sawyer continues to work hard, "he could be a really solid college-level vaulter," Kidd said.

Sawyer is the only PAHS student who has gotten this far in pole vaulting since Athletic Director Steve Reaves went to work for the Port Aransas Independent School District eight years ago.

"There's been a few kids who have tried it, but they didn't stick with it," Reaves said. Sawyer stuck with it. And not just because a bunch of people have been tutoring him.

"He's definitely got the vaulter's mentality. They're a little carefree and willing to go take a risk. He has jumped a few times and missed the mat and hit the ground," Reaves said, adding that Sawyer was not seriously hurt. "He jumped right back up and said, 'Hey, let's go again,' and I would have turned and run."

"He's just got that kind of mentality," Reaves said. "You just have to have a lot of courage."

Sawyer's best performance in a meet to date was a jump of 14 feet 6 inches at Ingleside High School this year. That's six inches higher than he got when he placed fourth at state last year.

Sawyer said each of his instructors have helped in one way or another.

"Mr. Franco kind of got me started and kept me in it," Sawyer said. "And I was like, 'OK, I can obviously do this.'"

Miller "helped out a lot with just little things I was completely doing wrong," Sawyer said. "He kind of fine-tuned me."

Kidd "knows a lot about (pole vaulting)," Sawyer said. "He helped me with drills I had never done before. ... It's helped out quite a bit."

Sawyer said he has gotten calls from several small colleges and a larger one in Louisiana, where track and field officials wanted to talk about the possibility of scholarships. But he's hoping he can do so well at state competition that a big university will come calling.

"I'm shooting for a huge jump at state," he said.

# South Jetty wins awards at STPA

The *South Jetty* won awards for writing, photography, sports pages and special sections in the South Texas Press Association's Better Newspaper Contest for work published during 2007.

Awards were presented during STPA's 81st annual convention held in Corpus Christi April 17-19.

First places were won for sports photos and editorial writing, second place was won for news coverage, third places were won for feature photos and special sections, and honorable mention was won for sports pages.

The *South Jetty* competed in the large weekly division. Points are awarded for first through third place, and the *South Jetty* was third overall behind the *Fredericksburg Standard Reporter* in first place.

Judges were newspaper professionals from the Arkansas Press Association.

The first place sports photo, taken by reporter/photographer Dan Parker, was part of an Island Focus feature on community baseball teams. It pictured Matt Hoskins of the Fisherman's Wharf team doing the splits while making a play at second base last summer.

Two editorials by editor and co-publisher Mary Henkel Judson were awarded first place. One was on micromanagement by Mayor Claude Brown and Councilman Charles Bujan. The other was on Brown's failure to support the return of Glenn Martin of Port Aransas to the regional transportation authority board.

The first in a series on the future of the GED program in Port Aransas won Parker second place in news coverage.

A photo of Port Aransas High School student David Hinojosa framed by tubas during a band practice earned Parker third place in feature photos.

The Summer 2007 Visitors' Guide was a team effort led by publisher Murray Judson with sales assistance from advertising representative Mary Hammond, and the graphic artwork of advertising production chief Elizabeth Klostermann and assistant Judy K. Krantz. Editorial support for the product is provided by Mary Judson, Parker, reporter Phil Reynolds, and layout was by all the above as well as former staffer Pam Greene. The team effort netted third place.

Sports pages produced primarily by Parker garnered an honorable mention from judges.

"Any awards won are always the result of team effort," said Murray Judson. "While individuals might have been named on certain awards, those individuals could not accomplish what they do without the support of our entire staff."

Judson said bookkeeper Dianne Null, office and circulation manager Ginger Massey, advertising director Jennifer Heddlesten and circulation

**Free lap-swimming offer ends Sunday**

This is the last week that lap swimming will be offered at no cost to the public at the Port Aransas Community Pool, 700 Clark Parkway.

The free swim, sponsored by Port Aransas Parks and Recreation Department, runs through April as part of the Governor's Texas Round-up Fitness Challenge.

Lap swimming is 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, noon to 6 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday.

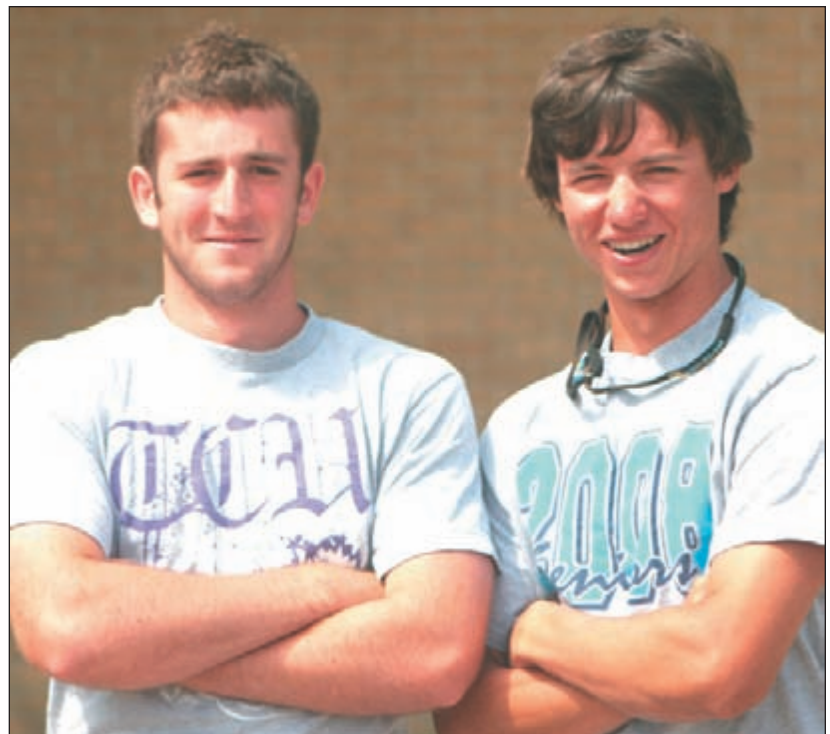
Sunday, April 27, is the last day to swim laps at no cost.

Brundrett Middle School 2008 Tennis Schedule	
April 18	Pre-district Alice
May 5	District Alice
Coach: Piper Boies	

PAHS Track 2008 Schedule	
February	
Sat. 16	Odem
Sat. 23	Ben Bolt
March	
Sat. 1	G.P.
Sat. 8	Ben Bolt
Sat. 15	Riviera
Sat. 22	Open
Thur. 27	Ingleside
April	
Wed. 2	District (Ben Bolt)
Tue. 8	Area (TBA)
Fri. Sat. 25/26	Regional Huntsville
May	
Fri. Sat. 9/10	State Austin
Head Coach: Steve Reaves Asst Coach: Javier Mendoza	

route manager Leslie Willey Jr. and assistants Laura Amstead, Shirley and Brent Uhl, and the newest member the staff, writer Laurie Strain, are key components of the *South Jetty* team. Mary Judson, who is assistant to

the president of STPA, and Murray Judson, are both past-presidents of STPA. Mary Judson also was appointed by the president of STPA to serve as nominating committee chairman.



STAFF PHOTO BY DAN PARKER

**All-state**

Port Aransas High School seniors Reid Copeland, left, and Cody Collins recently were named to the Academic All-State Basketball Team by the Texas Association of Basketball Coaches. "Accomplishments on the court and in the classroom are always hard to achieve," said Paul Patteson, coach of the Marlins basketball team. "I am extremely proud of these guys."



COURTESY PHOTO BY CHRISTIE ORTIZ

**Fore!**

Port Aransas High School golf team member Kelsey Ortiz swings during the regional tournament in Brenham on Monday, April 21.



STAFF PHOTO BY KAREN COLLINS

**Sealing the deal**

Charley Walker pitches against Runge to seal a play-off berth for the Marlins for the first time since the program started.



STAFF PHOTO BY JUDY K. KRANTZ

**Gift to PACT**

On Friday, April 18, on the opening day of Texas SandFest, Chuck Ardoin of CenturyTel, a sponsor of the amateur sand sculpting contest, gives Betty Crawford a check in the amount of \$1,500 to benefit the Port Aransas Community Theater. Other organizations benefitting from SandFest were Art Center for the Islands, the Food Pantry and The Port Aransas Preservation and Historical Association.