

Get going to get better

By Larry Pritchett

Past PCHS activities director

This week is going to be busy. We are actually on our way to Kansas to take care of some family business and it didn't dawn on me that we might not be back in time to get this week's efforts in on time-and you know how editors are about deadlines. I would rather get things done on time than face the boss' wrath.

Actually, Jan is pretty easy to work for and with when it comes to me getting things done, but the teacher in me still thinks that if an assignment is due at a certain time that doesn't mean a couple of days later.

The school year is winding down quickly. The spring sports have not had much cooperation from Mother Nature and I wouldn't count on much to finish it out. You just hope that the wind stays down as much as possible and moisture comes in the form of rain. It dries quickly and you don't have to scoop it. I am sure that the track team and the golf team would love to have a warm, still day to compete and then let it rain all night.

Even with the weather not being good, there were some good times met at Hershey. A 10.81 100 meters by Elliot Carlson was exceptional and Quinton Hite right behind him at 11.0 is good also. One thing about it, with districts track meets closing in, the runners ought to have pretty fresh legs. But on the other hand or leg, you need some experience and competition along the way to bring out the best in each competitor.

Hopefully they can finish strong and turn in good times in the district and qualify for the State Meet in Omaha.

With the close of the school year coming, the summer months will be decision time for athletes who are returning next school year. Here is the chance to improve your skills as an athlete.

Coaches will help, but they are limited in some ways so the improvement comes with each student. Do you really want to get better or do you just want to talk about it? There are lots of things to do in the summer and it is easy to say, "I will get started tomorrow." Tomorrow, as Annie sings, is always a day away.

There was a really good article in one of the papers written by Nebraska Women's basketball coach Connie Yori. She just said that summer basketball was over-coached and under-taught. I think she nailed part of the problem.

Basketball may be the worst offender, but other sports face the same problem. I have to admit that as a coach I probably helped the problem grow.

When I first started coaching you couldn't work with kids in the summer at all. They could go to basketball camps and usually almost all the state colleges had camps. They were designed to teach basic fundamental skills.

Today, some coaches don't even want to use the words "basic fundamental skills" because they think when a kid hears fundamentals, the player thinks there is no fun going to happen. We

eventually evolved to the point where there were very few fundamental camps but lots of camps where you played games all the time, with the idea being the more you played the better you would become. Your basic, fundamental skills would just naturally improve. Now kids might play 40 or 50 games in the summer.

The problem, as Coach Yori saw it, and I certainly agree, is that kids didn't really improve that much. Even in the summer when you are playing competitively, you don't really use that "off hand" as much because you are not as talented doing that. You have to win those summer games so you just keep doing the things that you are already good at doing. Your skill level doesn't improve that much.

I think it is much more of a problem when there are AAU coaches handling the teams. A lot of those teams are select teams and they just play. In 1995 when I had the then Valentino's team and we played in Vegas, the team that beat us and won the tournament that year was the Philadelphia Freedom. They had played 60-some games when they played our Nebraska team and that game was or seventh. All seven of our games were in the Vegas Tournament.

Anyway it is something to think about. If you can't dribble with your weak hand, and you don't work on getting better you will be stuck with the old saying, "If you keep on doing what you are doing, you are going to keep on getting what you are getting."

It is just my opinion, I could be wrong, but I don't think I am on this one.