



EMILY GIRARD • SR • INFIELDER

Mount Marty Softball Program Sports Experience, Motivation

BY CODY BALL
sports@yankton.net

This article originally appeared in the March 2 edition of the Press & Dakotan. It has been updated to reflect the ongoing season.

The Mount Marty College softball team will take to the field with plenty of experience this season, and even more motivation.

Last season the Mount Marty Lancers ended one spot out of the Great Plains Athletic Conference (GPAC) tournament, as they finished ninth place, with only the top eight going to the tournament. But it wasn't a late season meltdown that put the Lancers just out of the tournament, actually it was the opposite. Mount Marty swept their opponent in the final weekend of the regular season, but needed some help

from some other teams to clinch a spot in the tournament.

The help was not offered and the Lancers found themselves outside of the GPAC tournament. The team that clinched the eighth spot, Midland University, went on to earn a national tournament berth.

"We got a taste of what it takes, and that will help us this spring to get into the post-season," head coach Albert Fernandez said. "I am very positive with our chances this spring. This team knows how close we were last year and they have been using that as motivation to work hard since day one in the fall."

The team will also benefit from their experienced roster, which features six seniors. Those seniors are Emily Girard, Jessica Polk, Andrea Hansen, Paige Rechtenbaugh, Amanda Volgarino, and Brittany Bruns.

Girard, an Academic All-American performer who batted for a .333 average last year, also commented on the experience of the team.

"This year we have a large senior class, so there's a lot of experience on the team," Girard said. "Last season, half of the games we lost were decided by one or two runs, but no we've been here for three years and are familiar with the expectations of our coach and what it is going to take to win the close games."

Polk, a pitcher who has battled shoulder issues in the past, spoke of some other strengths that her team possesses.

"We just fit together. Simple as that," Polk said. "We have some strong hitters back this year and our freshman fit in as well. Defensively, I feel we are becoming

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Koch's Hard Work Takes Him From Walk-On To Scholarship Player

BY JEREMY HOECK
jeremy.hoeck@yankton.net

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article originally appeared in the April 3 edition of the Press & Dakotan.

VERMILLION — Not promised anything out of high school, Austin Koch worked and clawed himself into a legitimate Division I football player.

And for those efforts, the sophomore wide receiver from Tyndall was rewarded with a scholarship at the University of South Dakota — despite never having caught a pass for the Coyotes.

That's where Koch's odyssey differs from others. He switched positions and still impressed his coaches to the point where they put him on scholarship.

"It's been a journey," Koch said, prior to Monday afternoon's practice in Vermillion.

The former Bon Homme 3-sport standout came to USD as a walk-on — at defensive back — in 2009 under former coach Ed Meierkort. After redshirting one season, Koch played on special teams last fall, making 13 total tackles in nine games.

Despite putting in the necessary time, nothing was really promised to him beyond that, Koch freely admits.

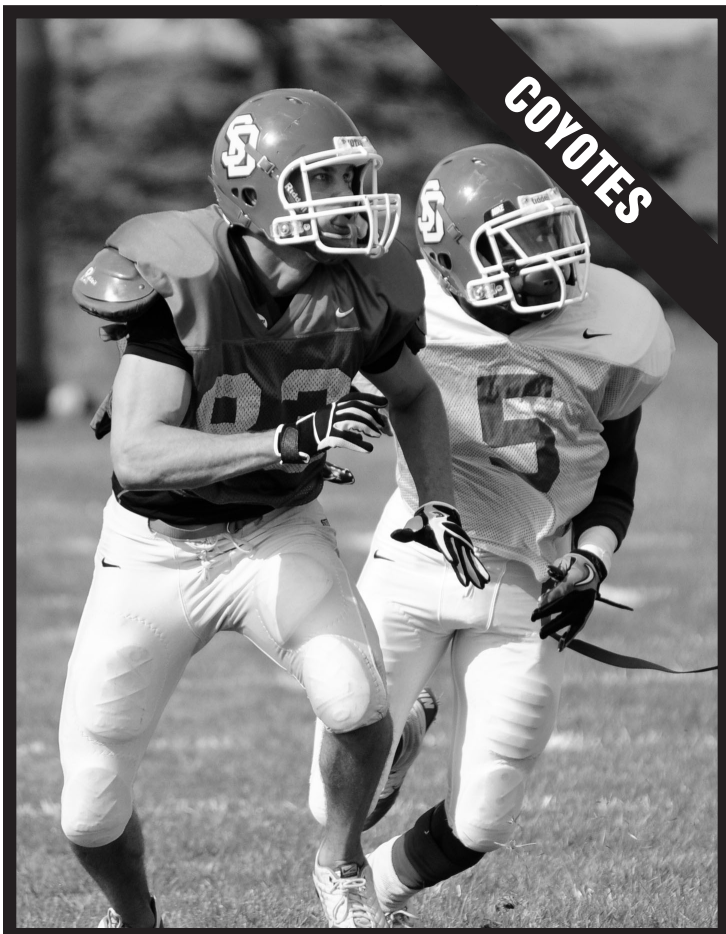
"When I came here, coach (Meierkort) just told me to work my way on to the field and hopefully I'd get a scholarship," he said. "I'm just glad it worked out."

Then came the day Koch was informed of the program's plans for his future.

"I got a text one day from our receivers coach (Kelton Copeland), saying he wanted me to talk to me," Koch said. "I thought I was getting cut or something. Then he said they wanted to offer me a scholarship. "I was excited, obviously."

During spring practices, Koch has gotten a lot of time rotating in with the first team. He said his natural main goal would be to earn a starting spot, or at the very least, see significant action this fall.

"He paid the price, that's for sure," head coach Joe Glenn said. "He went out and did all the things the coaches asked of him;



AUSTIN KOCH • SO • RECEIVER

never complained, and was rewarded.

"He'll be in the mix," Glenn added. "We can say, looking at things now, he'll be on the field when it means something."

Even when it comes to his head coach, Koch was thrown another obstacle.

"Right away, I thought, 'Uh oh, now I have to go out and make a name for myself all over again,'" Koch said. "Thankfully, coach Glenn said he liked what he saw on film."

The good news for Koch, and the other offensive players for the Coyotes, the bulk of the position changes came on the defensive side. Sure, there's a new offensive line coach, but the coordinator (Wes Beschoner) stayed the same, as did the receivers coach.

With the transition to wide receiver, naturally there are other challenges, particularly when it comes to working with a new group.

"It makes me want to work harder; to be a leader out there," Koch said. "Right away, I started watching what Will (Powell) does. He's the guy everyone looks to as a receiver."

Helping Koch's transition is the quarterback who will be throwing passes his way. Likely starter Josh Vander Maten spent the bulk of the 2011 season on the scout team with Koch.

"That helps our chemistry," Koch said. "He knows where I'll be, and I know his style; how he handles himself."

Even though he wasn't a big part of the offense in last Saturday's first scrimmage, Koch will be a key cog once the 2012 season opens in September, Glenn said.

"He's shown well so far, no question," Glenn said. "He's got that toughness, that hustle you look for in a receiver.

"He's a cowboy; one of those tough guys."

Spring FB

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Beschoner, Noah Shepard and Dante Warren before him, Vander Maten gives the Coyotes a dual threat — with his arm and his feet.

"In college football, running quarterbacks can be really successful, which is why you see so many of them," Glenn said. "You just teach them to get down. You can definitely expect us to throw some more option out there."

On the defensive side, Wakes and fellow transfer d-back Devin Taverna are seeing plenty of action and figure to be key components in the secondary.

"We'll get better just by competing," Wakes said. "Spring ball is good for that, just getting all the guys on the same page."

With only a handful of practices remaining before the April 21 spring game, the Coyotes aren't exactly preparing for Wisconsin. Though by the time the team returns in the fall, things should be clicking, Powell said.

"We have a lot of inexperience, but that's what spring ball is for," he said. "It looks sloppy now, but we'll get there. By the time the season starts, we'll look like a different team."

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Calendar

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Verdigre Inv. (Crofton, Niobrara-Verdigre, Parker, 9:30 a.m.)

GOLF, GIRLS' McCook Central-Montrose Inv. at Salem (Freeman, Marion, 8:30 a.m.)

TRACK & FIELD, PREP St. Edwards Inv. (Bloomfield, 8:30 a.m.)

Thursday, May 3

BASEBALL, COLLEGE Great Plains Athletic Conf. Tour. at Lincoln

BASEBALL, CLUB HIGH SCHOOL Corsica-Stickney-Armour at Hanson-Bridgewater-Emery, Vermillion at Dakota Valley

GOLF, BOYS' Tri-Valley Conf. at Fox Run GC, Yankton (Alcester-Hudson, Centerville, Freeman Academy, Gayville-Volin, Irene-Wakonda, Viborg-Hurley, 9 a.m.); Wayne Inv. (Crofton, Hartington Cedar Catholic, Laurel-Concord-Coleridge, 9 a.m.)

GOLF, GIRLS' S.F. Christian Inv. at Bakker Crossing GC (Beresford, Dakota Valley, Elk Point-Jefferson, Wagner, 9 a.m.); Tri-Valley Conf. at Fox Run GC, Yankton (Alcester-Hudson, Centerville, Freeman Academy, Irene-Wakonda, Viborg-Hurley, 9 a.m.)

TENNIS, BOYS' Vermillion at YHS (6:30 p.m.)

TRACK & FIELD, PREP Battle Creek Inv. (Hartington Cedar Catholic, 3 p.m.); Norfolk Catholic Inv. (Hartington, 3 p.m.); Northeast Neb. Activities Conf. at Atkinson (Creighton, Crofton, Laurel-Concord-Coleridge, Randolph, 3:30 p.m.); Winside Inv. at Laurel (Newcastle, Wausa, Wynot, 10 a.m.)

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Friday, May 4
BASEBALL, COLLEGE Great Plains Athletic Conf. Tour. at Lincoln

BASEBALL, CLUB HIGH SCHOOL S.F. Lincoln at Yankton (5:30 p.m.); Bon Homme at Parkston

BASEBALL, CLUB JV S.F. Lincoln at Yankton (7:30 p.m.)

GOLF, BOYS' Avon-Bon Homme Inv. at Springfield (Andes Central, Avon, Freeman, Platte-Geddes, Scotland, Tripp-Delmont, 9:30 a.m.); Stanton Inv. (Randolph, 9 a.m.); Wakefield Inv. (Laurel-Concord-Coleridge, Ponca, 9 a.m.)

GOLF, GIRLS' Avon-Bon Homme Inv. at Bon Homme CC (Andes Central, Avon, Bon Homme, Freeman, Platte-Geddes, Scotland, Tripp-Delmont, 9:30 a.m.); Big Eight Conf. at Vermillion (Vermillion, 10 a.m.)

SOFTBALL, WOMEN'S USD at IPFW (DH, 2 p.m.)

TENNIS, BOYS' Vermillion at S.C. East

TRACK & FIELD, COLLEGE OUTDOOR Great Plains Athletic Conf. at Lincoln (MMC)

TRACK & FIELD, PREP S.F. O'Gorman Inv. (YHS, Avon, Menno, Vermillion, Viborg-Hurley, 10 a.m.); USF Inv. (Alcester-Hudson, Andes Central, Irene-Wakonda, Platte-Geddes, 10 a.m.); Tri-Valley (Beresford, Dakota Valley, Elk Point-Jefferson, 3:30 p.m.)

TRACK & FIELD, 9TH-10TH S.F. O'Gorman Inv. (YHS, 10 a.m.)

Saturday, May 5

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BASEBALL, COLLEGE Great Plains Athletic Conf. Tour. at Lincoln

BASEBALL, CLUB HIGH SCHOOL Yankton at S.F. Lincoln (1 p.m.); Parkston at Vermillion

BASEBALL, CLUB JV Brookings at Yankton (DH, 2 p.m.)

BASEBALL, CLUB 9TH-10TH Yankton at Brandon Valley (DH, 4 p.m.)

GOLF, GIRLS' Eastern South Dakota Conf. at Pierre (YHS, 11 a.m.)

SOFTBALL, WOMEN'S USD at IPFW (noon)

TENNIS, BOYS' YHS/Aberdeen Central/Huron at Brookings (10 a.m.)

TRACK & FIELD, COLLEGE OUTDOOR Great Plains Athletic Conf. at Lincoln (MMC); Nebraska Inv. (USD)

TRACK & FIELD, PREP USF Inv. (Alcester-Hudson, Andes Central, Irene-Wakonda, Platte-Geddes, 10 a.m.); Parker Booster Inv. (Beresford, Centerville, Freeman Academy, Gayville-Volin, Marion, Parker, 9:30 a.m.); Running Elk Inv. at Elkton (Freeman, 10 a.m.)

TRACK & FIELD, MS Yankton JH Relays (YMS, 9:30 a.m.)

Sunday, May 6

BASEBALL, CLUB HIGH SCHOOL Yankton/Sturgis at Mitchell (2 p.m.); Beresford at Bon Homme; Corsica-Stickney-Armour at Vermillion

Monday, May 7

GOLF, BOYS' Hartford Pre-Region at Central Valley GC (Freeman, Marion, Parker, 9 a.m.); Highway 20 Inv. at Bassett CC (Niobrara-Verdigre, 10 a.m.); Randolph Inv. (Creighton, Crofton, Hartington, Hartington Cedar Catholic, Laurel-Concord-Coleridge, Randolph, 1 p.m.); Pre-Regions at Lakeview GC, Mitchell (Andes Central, Avon, Platte-Geddes, Tripp-Delmont, 9:30 a.m.)

GOLF, GIRLS' YHS at Lennox (2:30 p.m.); Big Sioux Conf. at Dell Rapids (Beresford, Dakota Valley, Elk Point-Jefferson, 9 a.m.); Hartford Pre-Region at Central Valley GC (Freeman, Marion, Parker, 9 a.m.); Pre-Regions at Lakeview GC, Mitchell (Andes Central, Avon, Bon Homme, Parkston, Platte-Geddes, Tripp-Delmont, Wagner, 9:30 a.m.)

TENNIS, BOYS' S.F. O'Gorman at YHS (4 p.m.)

Tuesday, May 8

BASEBALL, CLUB 9TH-10TH Harrisburg at Yankton (DH, 5 p.m.)

GOLF, BOYS' Laurel-Concord-Coleridge at Wayne, Ponca Tri. (Ponca)

TENNIS, BOYS' Brandon Valley/Mitchell at YHS (1 p.m.)

TRACK & FIELD, PREP Fort Randall Inv. at Avon (Andes Central, Avon, Marty, Tripp-Delmont-Armour, 1 p.m.); Southeast S.D. Conf. at Parkston (Bon Homme, Ethan-Parkston, Platte-Geddes, Scotland, Wagner, 3 p.m.); Tri-Valley Conf. at Centerville (Alcester-Hudson, Centerville, Freeman Academy, Gayville-Volin, Irene-Wakonda, Viborg-Hurley, 1 p.m.)

Wednesday, May 9

BASEBALL, CLUB HIGH SCHOOL Bon Homme at Yankton (7 p.m.)

BASEBALL, CLUB JV Bon Homme at Yankton (5 p.m.)

TRACK & FIELD, PREP Neb. Districts — D-3 at Hartington (Allen, Bloomfield, Hartington, Newcastle, Randolph, Wausa, Wynot); D-8 at O'Neill (Santee)

Thursday, May 10

GOLF, BOYS' Northeast Neb. Activities Conf. at Crofton (Creighton, Crofton, Laurel-Concord-Coleridge, Randolph, 8 a.m.); Viborg-Hurley at Alcester-Hudson

GOLF, GIRLS' Harrisburg Inv. at Spring Creek GC

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