

Golf: O’Gorman Beats Out Gazelles At Warrior Invite

SIOUX FALLS — Sioux Falls O’Gorman shot a 295 to run away with the Warrior Invitational girls’ golf tournament on Monday at Willow Run Golf Course in Sioux Falls.

Yankton finished second at 333, followed by Sioux Falls Lincoln (345) and Mitchell (351).

O’Gorman’s Jamie Benedict beat Yankton’s Megan Mingo in a two-hole playoff for medalist honors, each shooting 71. O’Gorman’s Claire Jansa shot 72.

The Gazelles had two other golfers in the top 20, Whitney Specht (84) and

Becky Frick (86). Amber Livingston shot 92, Rachel Frick shot 98 and Alicia Gregoire carded a 130.

TEAM SCORES: Sioux Falls O’Gorman 295, Yankton 333, Sioux Falls Lincoln 345, Mitchell 351, Watertown 352, Brookings 359, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 368, Aberdeen Central 373, Sioux Falls Washington 384, Brandon Valley 385

TOP 20: Jamie Benedict, O’Gorman 71; Megan Mingo, Yankton 71; Claire Jansa, O’Gorman 72; Kelsey Johnson, O’Gorman 74; Haliee Pieper, Watertown 75; Mae Meierhenry, Lincoln 76; Kristin Sabers, Mitchell 77; Ashlee Eggbraaten, Washington 78; Myla Brown, O’Gorman 78; Abbie Grevios, Lincoln 81; Meredith Turner, O’Gorman 84; Emily Olson, O’Gorman JV 84; Whitney Specht, Yankton 84; Madison Ammann, Brookings 84; Becky Frick, Yankton 86; Maria Darrah, Brookings 87; Taylor Leasure, Roosevelt 88; Kayla Krueger, Aberdeen Central 88; Madison VanWalleghen, Mitchell 89; Hannah Whitlock, Watertown 90; McKayla Poppens, Roosevelt 90

OTHER YHS: Amber Livingston 92, Rachel Frick 98, Alicia Gregoire 130

Vermillion Inv.

VERMILLION — Sioux Falls Christian put three golfers in the top four to earn top honors in the Vermillion Invitational girls’ golf tournament on Monday at The Bluffs Golf Course.

Sioux Falls Christian finished at 320, 30 strokes better than host Vermillion.

The Chargers’ Abby Perrenoud (74) and Mikaela Theobald (76) finished 1-2 in the event, with teammate Anna Perrenoud (82) placing fourth. Madison’s Sami Langford placed third at 79.

TEAM SCORES: Sioux Falls Christian 320, Vermillion 350, Harrisburg 359, Dakota Valley 367, Madison 383, West Central 383, Canton 400, Vermil-

lion JV 419, Beresford 423, Lennox 450, Dell Rapids 461, Tea Area 477
TOP 10: Abby Perrenoud, S.F. Christian 74; Mikaela Theobald, S.F. Christian 76; Sami Langford, Madison 79; Anna Perrenoud, S.F. Christian 82; Allison Heine, Vermillion 84; Taylor Steen, Harrisburg 86; Alexa From, West Central 87; Sadie Swier, West Central 87; Shylar Funck, Dakota Valley 87; Mikayla Christensen, S.F. Christian 88

Boys: Niobrara Valley Conf.

NIOBRARA, Neb. — Elgin Public-Pope John claimed four of the top six spots on the way to a 43-stroke victory in the Niobrara Valley Conference boys’ golf tournament, held Monday at Niobrara Golf Course.

EP-PJ shot 309, beating out North Central (352) and Clearwater-Orchard

(353). Ewing was fourth at 358.

North Central’s Jake Friedrich shot a 75 for a one-stroke victory over EP-PJ’s Andrew and Kyle Heithoff. EP-PJ’s Nick Heithoff and North Central’s Kyle Jackman each shot 78. EP-PJ’s Trent Hoefer carded a 79.

TEAM SCORES: Elgin Public-Pope John 309, North Central 352, Clearwater-Orchard 353, Ewing 358, Boyd County 360, Niobrara-Verdigre 380, Chambers-Wheeler Central 419

TOP 15: Jake Friedrich, North Central 75; Andrew Heithoff, EPPJ 76; Kyle Heithoff, EPPJ 76; Nick Heithoff, EPPJ 78; Kyle Jackman, North Central 78; Trent Hoefer, EPPJ 79; Cody Berni, Boyd County 81; Mitchell Atkinson, Boyd County 83; Dalton Willy, Clearwater-Orchard 83; Tate Schutt, Clearwater-Orchard 83; Tyler Childers, EPPJ 84; Andrew Lechtenberg, Boyd County 84; Laura Hynes, Ewing 86; Coy Reynolds, Niobrara-Verdigre 86; Robert Nordby, Ewing 87

Mettler, Buell Named USD Athletes Of Year

VERMILLION — University of South Dakota juniors Jeff Mettler and Bethany Buell were named Coyote Male and Female Athletes of the Year, respectively, at an awards ceremony Sunday at the Muenster University Center on the USD campus.

Mettler, a 4.0 student from Eureka, was named Track Championship Most Valuable Performer in helping lead USD’s indoor track team to its first Summit League Championship. He won individual championships in the 3,000-meter run and the mile and placed third in the 5,000-meter run. Mettler was the runner-up at the League’s Cross Country Championships in the fall. He currently holds the League’s best steeplechase time with a mark that ranks 12th in the region.

Buell, from St. Louis, Mo., earned first-team All-America honors after placing sixth in the pole vault at the NCAA Championship Meet in Fayetteville, Ark. It was the third All-America honor for Buell, who won her second Summit League Indoor Championship after clearing 14-feet-5.5-inches, a meet and program record. Buell currently holds the best outdoor vault in the nation at 14-feet-7.5-inches. She carries a 3.969 GPA.

Football player Tim Marlette from Sioux Falls, and track athlete Alexa Duling from Gregory, were named USD Scholar Athletes of the Year — an award reserved for seniors. Marlette led the Coyotes with 85 tackles last season. Duling, who carries a 4.0 GPA, is an All-American in the 400-meter hurdles.

Slive: Football Experts Should Pick NCAA Playoff Field

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) — Mike Slive wants knowledgeable football people choosing who plays for the national championship.

Whatever the selection committee’s makeup, the Southeastern Conference commissioner is aiming for a process the fans will buy into when the new system takes effect in two seasons.

“We want football expertise,” Slive said on Monday. “We want integrity, and we want transparency, because this is our opportunity to make sure that not only are we comfortable but you’re (the media) comfortable and all the fans are comfortable that this process is the way it should be. It’s not going to be easy.”

Slive isn’t predicting when that final, big piece of the playoff puzzle will be put in place but is hoping it will be in the next several months.

Speaking at the Associated Press Sports Editors Southeast regional meeting across from the SEC’s downtown headquarters, Slive spoke on the playoff system and the potentially stabilized conference alignment among other issues.

The Atlantic Coast Conference last week joined the Big Ten, Pac-12 and Big 12 when its members agreed to a grant of rights handing over their television rights to the league. The legally binding deal runs through 2027 and makes conference-jumping nearly impossible. Slive and ESPN are expected to announce a new SEC Network Thursday in Atlanta — minus the grant of rights.

“Looking at it from the outside looking in, it looks like it may create some stability,” Slive said. “And I do think that at this stage of where we are stability will be constructive so we can move ahead in some other ways.”

As for the playoffs, the commissioners decided last week that Cowboys Stadium will host the first championship game in the new postseason system. The Cotton Bowl, Fiesta Bowl and Chick-fil-A bowls joined the Rose, Orange and Sugar bowls in the semifinal rotation.

The next hurdle is settling on a committee that Slive expects to include from 14 to 20 members, plus



JEREMY HOECK/P&D

Abbey VanDenBerg of Mount Marty College sprints down the runway in a women's triple jump attempt at Friday's Mount Marty Twilight Meet at Williams Field. VanDenBerg, a sophomore, qualified for the NAIA Outdoor National Meet with a winning leap of 37-2.25.

In The Pits: So Far So Good For NASCAR’s New Car

BY JENNA FRYER
AP Auto Racing Writer

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — The only certainty at the unveiling of NASCAR’s new car was that the Gen-6 was aesthetically pleasing.

The new design looked more like a stock car and returned brand recognition to the manufacturers. Adding driver names to the windshield was a late addition, but a sporty touch.

But if the Gen-6 wasn’t racy, NASCAR’s exhaustive yearlong effort would amount to nothing more than putting lipstick on a pig.

Turns out all that hand-wringing was unnecessary.

Through nine races, the on-track action with the Gen-6 is much improved from a year ago, when fans were screaming about how boring NASCAR had become. The races haven’t been perfect, but there’s been no shortage of story lines and few runaway wins.

“I’m telling you, whoever designed this new car, we should kiss ‘em every weekend. It’s creating drama,” Clint Bowyer said after Saturday night’s race at Richmond. “We haven’t seen racing like this in years, since I first started in this sport (in 2004). When you can leave a race track and there’s people in tears because they won, and in tears because they got crashed, that’s what brings us to the race track, that kind of racing and determination and passion.”

The idea behind the Gen-6 was to improve the racing on intermediate tracks, where it was unwatchable at times last year.

NASCAR suffered through a brutal stretch last spring of painfully long green-flag runs with very little side-by-side racing. There were few cautions beyond occasional yellow flags for debris, and a four-race stretch without a multicar accident.

The problems were never more glaring

than Memorial Day weekend, when just hours after one of the most exciting Indianapolis 500’s in history, NASCAR staged a nearly four-hour snoozefest at Charlotte Motor Speedway. Only nine cars were on the lead lap of the Coca-Cola 600 when Kasey Kahne beat Denny Hamlin to the finish line by a whopping 4.295 seconds.

The racing hasn’t been so monotonous this year and the statistics back it up after nine races:

— There have been 1,203 more green flag passes throughout the field.

— The average margin of victory is .634 seconds, compared to 1.759 seconds last year.

— There are 49.9 percent of the cars finishing on the lead lap this year, up from 38.2 last year.

— The percentage of cars running at the finish of the race is up 3 percent to 83.2.

And, as Bowyer said, the drama has increased immensely.

Former teammates Denny Hamlin and Joey Logano crossed paths in the closing laps of the season-opening Daytona 500, and the feud culminated with their white-knuckled, door-to-door race to the finish in California last month. Each driver was so bent on not losing to the other, they ended up wrecking moments after Kyle Busch slid past them for the victory.

The accident sent Hamlin to the hospital, where he was diagnosed with a compression fracture in a vertebra that has sidelined him the last four races. Injury aside, that’s the racing NASCAR chairman Brian France had in mind when he demanded his senior management design a car that could improve the product.

“I have said repeatedly, every minute, that contact, especially late in the race when you are going for a win, that’s not only going to happen — that’s expected,” France said last month. “Both of them did exactly what I think you would do when you really, really want to win. Getting some contact, trying to race extra hard to

win the race, that’s what we’re about.”

It was on display again Saturday night at Richmond when a late caution sent the race into overtime for a two-lap sprint to the finish. Kevin Harvick rocketed from seventh to first, while Tony Stewart was knocked out of the groove by a hard-charging Kurt Busch, who called the final two laps “a free for all.”

Stewart restarted fifth, was bumped out of the way by Busch, and wound up 18th and angry.

“He just rammed right into us there at the end,” Stewart said through a team spokesman.

Logano, who finished third at Richmond and joked several times how pleased he was to not be in the middle of any new drama, praised the new car for improving the action.

“Like Clint said, about every single race has been entertaining and crazy, especially the finishes of them,” Logano said. “I think the car has done a great job. They look awesome, they have put on a good race. So we don’t really have anything to complain about.”

The Gen-6 is 150 pounds lighter than the old car, which makes them a little easier to drive and allows drivers to push a little harder. Changes to the design have helped eliminate the aerodynamic push that limited passing on bigger tracks, almost doubled the rear camber to put more grip in the rear tires and added more downforce that has given drivers more confidence to attempt a pass.

“You can be aggressive with the cars,” Harvick said. “Last year, the spoiler was shortened, it’s hard to be aggressive with those cars because they’re so edgy, you don’t have a lot of confidence in racing side-by-side. I feel like I can drive my car in 10 miles deep, do what I have to do on the inside of another car, not worry about spinning out and wrecking.”

The next test is Talladega, where

VanDenBerg Qualified For NAIA Meet, Now Looks For Strong Showing At GPAC

BY JEREMY HOECK

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The track recruiting pitch for Abbey VanDenBerg was a rather simple one: Come to Mount Marty College and maybe you can develop into one of the nation’s best jumpers.

Thing is, that’s exactly what has happened for the Mount Marty sophomore.

VanDenBerg, a Sioux Falls native, qualified for the NAIA Outdoor Track & Field Championships in the triple jump for a third consecutive season. Her leap of 37-feet-2.25 last Friday narrowly eclipsed the qualifying mark of 11.3 meters, or 37-feet-1.

“Every coach tells you, ‘You have the potential to be a national qualifier,’ and I thought they were just saying that,” VanDenBerg said last Friday during the Mount Marty Twilight Meet at Williams Field.

“I was so close my first (indoor) season but didn’t quite qualify,” she added. “It’s nice to know now that they were right; that I can do it.”

It didn’t take long for that to become clear.

A year ago as a freshman, VanDenBerg qualified for the NAIA outdoor meet and finished 10th in the triple jump at 37-feet-5.25 — just outside of All-American status.

She followed that up as a sophomore, when in March she took sixth place at the NAIA indoor meet at 37-feet-4.5, earning her All-American recognition.

VanDenBerg had proved that recruiting pitch to be true, according to Mount Marty volunteer jumps coach Justin Olson. A former assistant at Sioux Falls O’Gorman, Olson played a key role in bringing VanDenBerg — one of his own athletes — to Yankton.

“Right away, that was one of the reasons I went after her,” Olson said last Friday. “I started thinking about the NAIA and the marks she’d need, and I knew she’d be a perfect fit.”

Athletics, however, weren’t necessarily what brought VanDenBerg to Mount Marty. A presidential scholar, she — like many of her teammates — is not on a track scholarship. It’s a side venture, ac-

cording to MMC head coach Randy Fischer.

“She does this because she wants to, and to me, that speaks volumes,” Fischer said. “Track takes time away from her studies. She’s not getting athletic money, but she’s doing a lot of good things on her own.”

When it’s time for track, though, VanDenBerg is not completely on her own. She has worked with assistant coaches Jim Miner — a long-time fixture on the MMC staff — and Olson.

“She’s got a lot of potential to get a lot better,” Fischer said. “We’re hoping she stays healthy, because she’s got some great resources to work with.

“She’s got a great attitude, and she truly wants to get better.”

Especially when it comes to the national level.

VanDenBerg’s stiffest competition might be as much in the Great Plains Athletic Conference (GPAC) Outdoor Championships this Saturday in Seward, Neb., as it will be the national meet on May 23-25 in Marion, Ind. Courtney Mills of Hastings is the defending NAIA indoor champion, at 38-feet-9.

Facing that kind of competition naturally makes her better throughout the season, VanDenBerg said.

“It gives me the confidence that if I put everything together, I can go that far,” she said. “I don’t have to stress as much.”

That lack of stress can also trickle down to potential Mount Marty recruits, VanDenBerg said, referring to the luxury of having quality athletes to work with.

“It’s always a good recruiting point to say you can work with a national qualifier,” she said. “It’s nice to know that we have some good athletes here.”

Not to mention All-Americans like VanDenBerg.

“She’s just scratching the surface,” said Olson, who envisions VanDenBerg ultimately jumping 40 feet in the triple and 20 feet in the long jump.

“By the time she’s done, she’ll be one of the best in the nation. She has that determination.”

You can follow Jeremy Hoeck on Twitter at twitter.com/jhoeck

Bucks Win At S.C. North

SIOUX CITY, Iowa — The Yankton Bucks scored a 6-3 victory over Sioux City (Iowa) North in an off-postponed boys’ tennis dual on Monday.

The dual was originally scheduled for April 9, and was rescheduled four different times before finally being held.

Brandon Frick, Jason Shindler and Paul Fanta won in singles play. Luke Rockne and Paul Fanta, Ben Jensen and Frick, and Shindler and John Fanta each teamed up for doubles victories.

Yankton hits the road again today (Tuesday) for a dual at Sioux Falls Lincoln.

YANKTON 6, S.C. NORTH 3
SINGLES: Chris Habermann N def. Luke Rockne Y 8-4; Alec Hauge N def. Ben Jensen Y 9-8 (7-4); Brandon Frick Y def. Liam Bald N 9-7; Jason Shindler Y def. Drew Ruiz N 8-3; Hoang Le N def. John Fanta Y 8-6; Paul Fanta Y def. Hieu Nguyen N 8-6

DOUBLES: Luke Rockne-Paul Fanta Y def. Habermann-Nguyen N 8-6; Ben Jensen-Brandon Frick Y def. Hauge-Bald N 8-4; Jason Shindler-John Fanta Y def. Ruiz-Le N 8-0

JV: Greg Hauer Y def. Jack Dean Welte N 8-0; Greg Hauer Y def. Alex Corbin N 8-2

Madison Quad

MADISON — The Yankton Bucks went 0-3 in a boys’ tennis dual on Saturday in Madison.

Watertown and Mitchell each beat Yankton 9-0. Madison beat the Bucks 6-3, with Luke Rockne and Jason Shindler winning in singles. Shindler and Hunter Rockne won in doubles play.

WATERTOWN 9, YANKTON 0
SINGLES: Jordan Feige W def. Luke Rockne Y 8-3; Tanner Heiser W def. Hunter Rockne Y 8-0; Mark Despiegler W def. Matt Jensen Y 8-0; Tommy Nealon W def. Jason Shindler Y 8-6; Austin VanderWeide W def. Nathan List Y 8-1; Matt Gauger W def. Paul Fanta Y 8-1

DOUBLES: Feige-Heiser W def. L. Rockne-P. Fanta Y 8-1; Despiegler-Nealon W def. Jensen-List Y 8-0; VanderWeide-Gauger W def. Shindler-H. Rockne Y 8-4

MADISON 6, YANKTON 3
SINGLES: Luke Rockne Y def. Ryan Golden M 8-2; Jacob Leighton M def. Hunter Rockne Y 8-0; Kevin Shan M def. Matt Jensen Y 8-1; Jason Shindler Y def. Matthew Green M 8-0; Gabe Richards M def. Nathan List Y 8-5; Matt Graft M def. Paul Fanta Y 8-5

DOUBLES: Golden-Leighton M def. L. Rockne-P. Fanta Y 8-6; Shan-Green M def. Jensen-List Y 8-2; Shindler-H. Rockne Y def. Richards-Graft 8-3

MITCHELL 9, YANKTON 0
SINGLES: Jacob Cerasimo M def. Luke Rockne Y 8-4; Beau Brown M def. Hunter Rockne Y 8-1; Kanin Nelson M def. Matt Jensen Y 8-0; Tate Crago M def. Jason Shindler Y 8-8 (10-7); Alex Hegg M def. Nathan List Y 8-1; Brandon Lehr M def. Paul Fanta Y 8-2

DOUBLES: Cerasimo-Crago M def. L. Rockne-P. Fanta Y 8-5; Brown-Nelson M def. Jensen-List Y 8-0; Hegg-Lehr M def. Shindler-H. Rockne Y 8-3