



P&amp;D FILE PHOTO

Yankton senior Sarah Santos returns a shot during a match in the 2011 season. Santos is the lone senior for the Gazelles, who open the 2012 season today (Friday) at home against Rapid City Stevens.

# Gazelles Open Season Today

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK

[james.cimburek@yankton.net](mailto:james.cimburek@yankton.net)

With just one senior and one junior among the dozen girls in practice for the Yankton Gazelles, the squad won't take a lot of experience to the court when they open the girls' tennis team today (Friday). But coach Ginger Larsen expects that the experience the Gazelles gain — along with the experience they return — will get them ready to go by the time state rolls around in early October.

The Gazelles open today against Rapid City Stevens, the opening match of a two-day quad at the YHS/SAC tennis courts.

"We have a tough team ahead in Stevens," Larsen said. "They're probably the second-best team in the state."

Senior Sarah Santos, junior Taylor Rothenberger and sophomore Sarah Rockne return with experience from last year's squad. Rockne finished third at flight five singles, and teamed with Rothenberger to advance to the consolation finals at flight three doubles. Santos competed at flight six singles.

"We've got a good nucleus," Larsen said. "They've come in with great attitudes. We do not have a lot of experience, but we've got great leadership."

The Gazelles have proven willing to put in hard work to improve, even volunteering to have two-a-day practices during the first week of the preseason. In addition, Rockne and Rothenberger have both been working to rehab major injuries from the off-season. Larsen expects that

hard work to continue.

"Having 12 players in competition means that anybody could step up and challenge for a varsity position," she said. "It's going to make everyone better knowing that someone could challenge for their spot."

The lineup for today's matchup with Stevens — and Saturday's matchups with Watertown and Vermillion — will probably not look like the lineup that takes the court for the state tournament, Oct. 4-6 in Rapid City.

"This weekend is going to be a test weekend," Larsen said. "The first couple of weeks are going to be a feeling out period. We're looking for continued improvement and a good attitude when they step on the court."

The Gazelles will be looking to build back the squad after graduating four players from a team that placed eighth in the state tournament a year ago.

"We were about the only team that lost a big chunk of its lineup," Larsen said. "We'll see where we're at after this weekend."

Yankton plays Stevens today at 4 p.m., preceded by a matchup between Stevens and Watertown at 1 p.m. On Saturday, Stevens will play Vermillion and Watertown will play Yankton, each starting at 9 a.m. Matches to follow will include Watertown against Vermillion, followed by Yankton against Vermillion.

*You can follow James D. Cimburek on Twitter at [twitter.com/aceman904](https://twitter.com/aceman904)*

## Huskers Seek End To 12-Year League-Title Drought

BY ERIC OLSON

AP Sports Writer

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — A year after being picked by many to win the Big Ten in its first season in the conference, Nebraska isn't even the favorite in its division.

In fact, the proud program has gone 12 years without a league championship — its longest drought since 1941-62.

Coach Bo Pelini has won at least nine games each of his first four years, but last season's 9-4 campaign and the third-place finish in the Legends Division was considered a step back. Turnovers, penalties, dropped passes and soft defensive play sabotaged the Cornhuskers.

"We've had good years here in the past," offensive lineman Jeremiah Sirles said. "9-4 is

not a bad year. 8-4 is not a bad year. It's a good year. We're tired of being good."

Any shot Nebraska has at achieving greatness likely hinges on what happens against Michigan and Michigan State, the consensus top two teams in the division.

The Huskers believe their spread-option offense will be sharper under second-year coordinator Tim Beck. Taylor Martinez is going into his third year as starting quarterback, Rex Burkhead has been one of the nation's most productive running backs for two years and leading receiver Kenny Bell is coming off a strong finish to 2011.

The defense, which has a new coordinator in John Papuchis, is confident it can stop its slide in the national rankings the past two years despite having a lineman, linebacker and cornerback taken in the NFL draft.

## TUNING UP FOR 2012



JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&amp;D

ABOVE: USD running back Jasper Sanders, 5, finds running room during Thursday morning's practice in Vermillion. Sanders and veteran Marcus Sims are expected to be the main weapons in the Coyote running game this season.

BELOW: USD head coach Joe Glenn addresses the crowd during the Coyotes' media day Thursday afternoon. The Coyotes will begin their first season under Glenn Sept. 1 at the University of Montana.

## RB's Sims, Sanders Set To Shine

BY JEREMY HOECK

[jeremy.hoeck@yankton.net](mailto:jeremy.hoeck@yankton.net)

VERMILLION — Seated together at a small table inside the University of South Dakota student center, Marcus Sims and Jasper Sanders appeared to be closer to brothers than they are teammates.

The duo, though two years apart, boast a similar build at 5-foot-10, nearly 200 pounds. This fall, they will also share duties as the top running back on the football field.

Sims, a senior, and Sanders, a sophomore transfer, both said Wednesday during USD's football media day in Vermillion that they relish the competition between them — especially when it comes

to making the 'wow' plays.

"You don't want to be satisfied, you always want to get better every day," Sims said. "When Jasper makes a play, I want to do the same thing, but even better. I think that helps us both."

Sims, at 5-foot-10, 196 pounds, led the Coyotes in rushing last season with 660 yards — 5.2 yards per carry — and four touchdowns. He emerged as an every-down threat when last year's top back, Chris Ganius, was injured.

"It's great to have another guy in here that complements my game, but he really pushes me," Sims said. "Every day it's a battle; in the weightroom, on the field,

BACKS | PAGE 8A



## Nebraska Falls At Little League World Series; Japan, Calif. Win

SOUTH WILLIAMSPORT, Pa. (AP) — After a hard-earned win Thursday, the team from Petaluma, Calif., got two days off to get ready for its next game at the Little League World Series.

Thirteen-year-old Austin Paretto had other plans.

"Swimming," the outfielder exclaimed with eyes wide open in anticipation.

The pint-sized Paretto and his teammates earned a little down time at the Little League complex pool after a 6-4 victory Thursday over Fairfield, Conn., on a sun-splashed opening day.

Japan also won its early game, 7-0 over Curacao, while Taiwan routed a team from Ramstein Air Base in Germany, 14-1.

In the late game, Goodlettsville, Tenn., beat Kearney, Neb., 12-1, behind 12-year-old pitcher Brock Myers, who struck out eight in 4 1-3 innings and helped himself at the plate with a two-run homer in the fifth.

Myers' big-league performance spoiled a historic moment for Nebraska — it was the first time a team from the state had advanced to South Williamsport.

Nebraska will play Connecticut on Saturday in an elimination game. No matter what happens, Kearney's kids are already stars back home.

The mini-mashers from the Midwest have been receiving emails and text messages all week from family, friends and new-found baseball fans from all over Nebraska. Football is king in Nebraska, but the boys from Kearney might just be challenging the Cornhuskers as the state's most popular team.

Some players have been wearing Nebraska Cornhuskers T-shirts in practice.

"I think we do personally (have more fans) right now," coach Monte Dakan joked this week. "I'm hoping we have."

California starting pitcher Bradley Smith made an impression, too, after striking out seven and going 4 for 4 at the plate with a homer and three RBIs to help the West region champs hold on against Connecticut.

The 13-year-old Smith strikes an imposing pose with his 6-foot-3 frame. But he had some early jitters on the mound after

giving up a first-inning home run to Biagio Paoletta.

"You can't be nervous in these games. You're one of the top 16 teams ... in the world," Smith said calmly. "So I was thinking, 'What do I have to be nervous about?'"

He felt much better in the third after hitting a 2-0 curveball deep to left-center that just eluded outfielder Matt Clarkin's glove and just cleared the fence 225 feet away for a two-run homer and 3-1 lead. Smith also struck out seven over four innings.

But California couldn't shake Connecticut. Will Lucas tripled home a run before scoring on a passed ball to get Connecticut within a run in the bottom of the fifth.

Connecticut threatened again in the sixth, but reliever Andrew White got a double play and strikeout to end the game. The 12-year-old lefty pumped his fist after he left the mound to be greeted by giddy teammates.

The 5-foot Paretto, the smallest player on his team, came up big with a two-run single in the fifth.

"It's been amazing, it's just so exciting to play with teams all around and now we're in the same position," Paretto said. "Just seeing them (at the tournament) and now we're in the same position, it's really awesome."

Connecticut outfielder Ryan Meury left the game with a bloodied lip after getting by a pitch, but got an ovation after walking back to the dugout. A Little League spokesman said Meury needed a couple stitches to close the gash. It was unclear if Meury would be ready for Connecticut's next game Saturday.

JAPAN 7, CURACAO 0: Kotaro Kiyomiya and Noriatsu Osaka combined for a two-hitter for Tokyo in the opening game of the Little League World Series. Kiyomiya didn't allow a hit and struck out seven in 2 2-3 innings. Osaka finished on the mound in relief with seven strikeouts.

A team from Japan has won the World Series international title the last two seasons. This year's Japan region champs, from Tokyo, took control early with three runs in each of the first two innings.

Not bad for a Japan team that hadn't played since July 7.

LLWS | PAGE 8A

## College Football: Northwestern Aiming High Again

### USD Faces Wildcats On Sept. 22

EVANSTON, Ill. (AP) — All Northwestern can see is the potential. Limits are out of sight.

The Wildcats are talking big as another season approaches and insisting this could be the year they finally win a bowl game, maybe a Big Ten championship. "I know it's been, what, 300-plus years since our last one?" quarterback Trevor Siemian said.

Well, not quite. It just seems that way.

It has been more than six decades since Northwestern won a bowl game, and the current players were in elementary school when the 2000 team captured a share of the conference title, the most recent one for the program.

That's something the Wildcats hope to change this year.

They're coming in with a big

chip on their shoulder after a disappointing 6-7 season that began with a Heisman Trophy campaign for quarterback Dan Persa and ended with their fourth bowl loss in as many seasons. That put Northwestern's postseason record at 1-9, the lone win coming when the 1948 team beat California in the Rose Bowl.

"We're proud to have gone to four straight bowl games, but that's not the destination for our program," coach Pat Fitzgerald said. "You walk in to our team room to my right in our dressing room would be our goals. The first one is to consistently prepare. The second is to win our division. The third is to win the Big Ten championship. The fourth is to win our bowl game."

Whether Northwestern reaches those goals could hinge

on the arm and legs of quarterback Kain Colter. One of the Big Ten's most versatile players, he steps in as the No. 1 quarterback now that Persa is gone, and the Wildcats are hoping he can build on a promising sophomore season.

He shared some of the load at quarterback with Persa still recovering after rupturing an Achilles tendon the previous season and saw time at receiver. The result was this. He threw for 673 yards, ran for 654 and caught 43 passes for 466 yards.

Now, all eyes are on Colter. Fitzgerald said he's "extremely confident" in him and pointed out he has more experience than Mike Kafka and Persa did going into their junior seasons.

"He's a very dynamic quarterback," the coach said.

And if Colter stumbles, Fitzgerald believes they have another viable option in Siemian.

Whoever lines up behind center figures to have plenty of targets even if the Wildcats lost their top two receivers from last season in Jeremy Ebert (1,060 yards) and Drake Dunsmore (522 yards). Demetrius Fields leads a balanced group that includes Southern California transfer Kyle Prater, a Chicago-area product who got a waiver from the NCAA and will not have to sit out this year.

"I think everyone knows what direction we're trying to take this thing," Siemian said. "We're trying to be Big Ten champs and go to the Rose Bowl. Last year, (there was) maybe a little uncertainty with Dan and how his Achilles was coming and if and when he was going to be able to start the opener and a couple games after that. I think this year, we have a really confident team."

Already, Northwestern has endured one huge scare. Last week,

running back Treyvon Green was taken from the practice field in an ambulance after a hit to the chest. A few hours later, teammates learned he should be ready for the opener at Syracuse on Sept. 1.

Green is expected to play a big role after he appeared in all 13 games and ran for 362 yards as a true freshman last season.

The Wildcats, meanwhile, are eyeing something big. Now, it's up to them to deliver.

"We have a big chip on our shoulder just because we want that Big Ten championship," running back Venric Mark said. "That's all that we want. You can always say that, but it's about action. What are you doing to achieve that goal? ... This is best that I've ever seen this team come together, chemistry-wise. It's the best I've ever seen this team practice together, and we're moving fast."

## Summit League Secures TV Deal With Midco SN, Fox College Sports

ELMHURST, Ill. — The Summit League along with Midco Sports Network and Fox College Sports have reached an agreement that will provide at least 20 men's and women's basketball games to a national cable television audience during the 2012-13 season.

Midco Sports Network will produce and air eight Summit League matchups during the regular season and all men's and women's quarterfinal and semifinal games from The Summit League Championships in March. Each of those 20 games will be simulcast to a national audience by Fox College Sports. As many as five additional games will be announced in the coming weeks with Midco Sports Network holding an option to include up to three exclusive regional telecasts and FCS to select two more games for national availability.

All nine Summit League men's basketball teams will have at least one nationally-televised game during the regular season with additional opportunities during the tournament. The first broadcast comes Nov. 29, the opening night of Summit League play, when 2012 tournament finalist Western Illinois travels to South Dakota. A three-game January slate ends with defending Summit League champion South Dakota State hosting South Dakota in a clash of intrastate rivals on Jan. 31. The final regular season broadcast comes on March 2, the last day of league play, when Summit League newcomer Omaha hosts North Dakota State.

The 2012-13 national television schedule includes a Dec. 30 women's contest featuring three-time defending Summit League champion South Dakota State hosting North Dakota State.

Saturday, March 9 marks the beginning of The Summit League Championships and the first of three days of all-day coverage from Sioux Falls. Women's doubleheaders will air during the afternoon with men's doubleheaders each evening. Quarterfinal games are set for March 9-10 with the semifinals on March 11.

HUSKERS | PAGE 8A