

# Life In The Valley

A game by game look at USD's opponents this season in the Missouri Valley Football Conference

## Western Illinois

**LOCATION:** Macomb, Ill.  
**PRESEASON RANK:** Not ranked  
**2012:** 3-8  
**LAST YEAR VS. USD:** W, 24-17 in Vermillion. The Leathernecks scored on a 68-yard touchdown pass to break a tie.  
**RETURNING STARTERS:** 15  
**KEY OFFENSIVE PLAYERS:** Nikko Watson (RB, 1,145 yds, 4 TD); Fredson Salomon (WR, 30 catches, 373 yds, 2 TD)  
**KEY DEFENSIVE PLAYERS:** J.J. Raffelson (LB, team-high 105 tackles); David McDaniel (DB, 58 tackles, 4 INT); Martinez Davis (DB, 38 tackles, team-high 5 INT)  
**NOTES:** WIU has a new head coach in Bob Nielson, who spent 10 years as the coach at Division II Minnesota-Duluth, where he won two national titles..... The Leathernecks averaged only 9.7 points per game last year..... Three quarterbacks combined to throw two touchdowns and 13 interceptions in 2012.

Away — Sept. 28 — 3 p.m.

## Missouri State

**LOCATION:** Springfield, Mo.  
**PRESEASON RANK:** Receiving votes  
**2012:** 3-8  
**LAST YEAR VS. USD:** W, 27-24 in Springfield. The Bears scored 17 points over the final six minutes to upset the Coyotes, who led 21-3 at halftime.  
**RETURNING STARTERS:** 10  
**KEY OFFENSIVE PLAYERS:** Kierra Harris (QB, 997 yds, 7 TD, 8 INT); Dorian Buford (WR, 59 catches, 642 yds, All-MVFC first team); Ryan Heaston (RB, 424 yds)  
**KEY DEFENSIVE PLAYERS:** Caleb Schaffitzel (S, team-high 109 tackles, 5 INT); Anthony Grady (DE, 49 tackles, 5 sacks); Eric Pearce (DT, 36 tackles); Andrew Beisel (LB, 73 tackles, 2 sacks)  
**NOTES:** The Bears return 100 percent of its total offense from last season...MSU returns eight letter-winners and nine players who saw time on the defensive line in 2012...MSU started last year 0-6 but won three in a row and nearly upset North Dakota State, losing 21-17.

Home — Oct. 5 — 2 p.m. — D-Days

## Indiana State

**LOCATION:** Terre Haute, Ind.  
**PRESEASON RANK:** Receiving votes  
**2012:** 7-4  
**LAST YEAR VS. USD:** W, 45-14, in Terre Haute. The Sycamores built a 28-0 halftime lead and returned a pair of interceptions for touchdowns.  
**RETURNING STARTERS:** Not listed  
**KEY OFFENSIVE PLAYERS:** Shakir Bell (RB, 1,475 yds, 11 TD); Mike Perish (QB, 1,615 yds, 10 TD, 8 INT); Demory Lawshe (WR, 31 catches, 393 yds, 3 TD)  
**KEY DEFENSIVE PLAYERS:** Calvin Burnett (DB, 60 tackles, 1 sack, 4 INT); Connor Underwood (DL, 48 tackles, 6 sacks, 1 INT); Donovan Layne (DB, 48 tackles, 2 INT)  
**NOTES:** Head coach Mike Sanford enters his first season at the helm after coming to ISU from Utah State...The Sycamores fell out of FCS playoff contention with two straight losses to close last season...Bell needs 542 rushing yards to become the school's all-time leader.

Home — Oct. 12 — 1 p.m.

## Northern Iowa

**LOCATION:** Cedar Falls, Iowa  
**PRESEASON RANK:** No. 17  
**2012:** 5-6  
**LAST YEAR VS. USD:** W, 24-21 in Vermillion. The Panthers held off a Coyote rally, recovering an onside kick with 40 seconds left.  
**RETURNING STARTERS:** 13  
**KEY OFFENSIVE PLAYERS:** Sawyer Kollmorgen (QB, 2,460 yds, 21 TD, 8 INT); David Johnson (RB, 1,021 yds, 13 TD); Brett LeMaster (WR, 32 catches, 601 yds, 4 TD)  
**KEY DEFENSIVE PLAYERS:** Xavier Williams (DL, 50 tackles, school-record 5 blocked kicks); Jordan Gacke (LB, 79 tackles); Deiondre Hall (DB, 29 tackles)  
**NOTES:** UNI is coming off its first losing season since 2002...Kollmorgen led the league in touchdown passes (21) last season and finished second in voting for the Jerry Rice Award (top FCS freshman)...UNI played two FBS games last season, against Wisconsin and Iowa. The Panthers play just one this fall, at Iowa State.

Away — Oct. 19 — 4 p.m.

## Illinois State

**LOCATION:** Normal, Ill.  
**PRESEASON RANK:** No. 13  
**2012:** 9-4 (FCS post-season, L in quarterfinals)  
**LAST YEAR VS. USD:** W, 34-31 in Vermillion. The Redbirds recovered an onside kick with 16 seconds left to preserve the win.  
**RETURNING STARTERS:** 12  
**KEY OFFENSIVE PLAYERS:** Cameron Hunt (RB, 313 yds, 2 TD); Lechein Neblett (WR, 49 catches, 667 yds, 5 TD); James O'Shaughnessy (19 catches, 403 yds, 3 TD); Jordan Neukirch (FB, preseason All-American)  
**KEY DEFENSIVE PLAYERS:** Colton Underwood (DE, 95 tackles, 10.5 sacks, preseason All-American); Mike Banks (DB, 55 tackles, 2 INT)  
**NOTES:** The Redbirds had one player (Nate Palmer) selected in the NFL Draft and four others sign free agent deals...Senior fullback Jordan Neukirch did not record a carry last season but was named to the All-MVFC first team...ISU graduated five of its top six tacklers from a year ago...15 players on the roster are transfers from FBS schools.

Away — Oct. 26 — 1 p.m.

## Youngstown State

**LOCATION:** Youngstown, Ohio  
**PRESEASON RANK:** Receiving votes  
**2012:** 7-4  
**LAST YEAR VS. USD:** W, 13-10 in Youngstown. Jamaine Cook rushed for 203 yards.  
**RETURNING STARTERS:** 13  
**KEY OFFENSIVE PLAYERS:** Kurt Hess (QB, 2,112 yds, 15 TD); Christian Bryan (WR, 30 catches, 372 yds, 3 TD); Andrew Williams (WR, 27 catches, 424 yds, 3 TD)  
**KEY DEFENSIVE PLAYERS:** Teven Williams (LB, 63 tackles); Travis Williams (LB, 61 tackles); Julius Childs (CB, 50 tackles, 1 INT)  
**NOTES:** YSU upset FBS Pittsburg 31-17 last season...The Penguins have to replace 1,200-yard rusher Jamaine Cook, but return three of their top four receivers for the school's all-time leader in touchdown passes, Kurt Hess...Hess has started all 33 games at quarterback in his career and owns the school record for career touchdown passes (53).

Home — Nov. 2 — 1 p.m.

## South Dakota State

**LOCATION:** Brookings, S.D.  
**PRESEASON RANK:** No. 6  
**2012:** 9-4 (FCS post-season, L in second round)  
**LAST YEAR VS. USD:** W, 31-8 in Brookings. The Jackrabbits scored in five different ways.  
**RETURNING STARTERS:** 15  
**KEY OFFENSIVE PLAYERS:** Zach Zenner (RB, nation-best 2,044 yds, 13 TD); Austin Sumner (QB, 2,443 yds, 15 TD); Brandon Hubert (WR, 34 catches, 483 yds, 3 TD); Bryan Witzmann (OT, preseason All-American)  
**KEY DEFENSIVE PLAYERS:** T.J. Lally (LB, 107 tackles, 6 sacks, 2 INT); Doug Peete (DL, 54 tackles, 6 sacks); David Hettiger (DL, 56 tackles, 6 sacks)  
**Home — Nov. 16 — 1 p.m.**

## North Dakota State

**LOCATION:** Fargo, N.D.  
**PRESEASON RANK:** No. 1  
**2012:** 14-1 (won second straight FCS title)  
**LAST YEAR VS. USD:** W, 54-0 in Sioux Falls, S.D. The Bison held the Coyotes to 76 total yards of offense.  
**RETURNING STARTERS:** 18  
**KEY OFFENSIVE PLAYERS:** Brock Jensen (QB, 2,331 yds, 17 TD, championship game MVP); Billy Turner (OT, All-American by 5 publications); Sam Ojuri (RB, 1,047 yds, 12 TD)  
**KEY DEFENSIVE PLAYERS:** Marcus Williams (CB, 18 career INT, MVFC Defensive Player of the Year); Grant Olson (LB, team-high 148 tackles)  
**NOTES:** The Bison are 28-2 with two national titles over the last two seasons, both times beating Sam Houston State in the final...NDSU is 6-3 against FBS teams since 2006, with wins over Minnesota in 2011 and Colorado State last fall...The Bison haven't lost on the road since 2010.

Away — Nov. 23 — 2:30 p.m.

**USD Non-Conference Opponents — Aug. 31 vs. UC Davis (2 p.m.); Sept. 7 at Kansas (6 p.m.); Sept. 21 at Northern Arizona (6 p.m.); Nov. 9 vs. Montana (1 p.m.)**  
 Get Details On Each USD Football Game With The Press & Dakotan's "Gameday" Section.

## South Dakota State | Football

# Jacks Hungry For More After First Playoff Win

BY JEREMY HOECK  
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Nine wins. Four losses. The record a year ago for the South Dakota State football team, though a 4-win jump from the previous season, was impressive, but the Jackrabbits are far from content.

If only there was a word to describe that fine line, head coach John Stiegelmeier joked.

"I go from thinking we can win every football game to times where I don't even think we're close to our potential," he said. "I feel good that we're going to be prepared."

Outsiders also feel good about where the Jackrabbits are as the 2013 season begins Aug. 31 at home against Butler. SDSU was tabbed No. 6 in the FCS media poll and No. 7 by the coaches — the two most notable polls.

Still, the Jacks can't afford to relish those predictions, according to junior offensive lineman Trevor Greger.

"I know that we were picked in the top ten, but to me, that we're still picked to lose a couple games," Greger, a former Wagner standout, said. "We're focusing on going 1 and 0 every week."

"We can't focus too far ahead," he added. "If we set our minds on the second or third game, it takes all your attention away from the first game."

As the program has improved from back-to-back 5-6 seasons in 2010 and 2011, it has tried to look at "objective measures," Stiegelmeier said. "Stats never tell you that, and wins and losses may not either," Stiegelmeier said. "At the end of the season, were we one of the teams in the playoff picture? Are we sneaking in?"

"The goal, the target is to be one of the top eight seeds," he added. "That's how we try to quantify moving in the right direction."

To continue that ascent, the Jacks will turn to 15 returning starters, with the biggest group coming on both lines.

SDSU brings back four of five offensive linemen (Greger, All-American Bryan Witzmann, Alex Parker and Taylor Stuess), as well as quarterback Austin Sumner, tight end Vince Benedetto, receiver Brandon Hubert and All-American running back Zach Zenner.



Zach Zenner (31)

rusher, Zenner ran for 2,044 yards and 13 touchdowns.

"A lot of the time he made something out of nothing, but sometimes we made big holes for him," Greger said. "The rest goes along with 2,000 yards."

Not that Zenner would ever talk about those numbers.

"He's one of those guys that doesn't get all caught up in the spotlight," Greger said. "He's probably the most humble dude I've ever met. He probably doesn't even know he's an All-American."

"If we can do our job, he can do his."

A perfect example of Zenner's tendency not to follow stats: Greger and some of his offensive teammates mentioned to Zenner that he was only 11 yards shy last season of the SDSU record.

"He honestly had no idea how many (yards) he had," Greger said.

As the Jacks look to become more balanced on offense, they know that Sumner is completely healthy at quarterback — he battled a thumb injury last season, though still racking up 2,443 passing yards with 15 touchdowns (and 14 interceptions).

"We obviously ran the ball

8/31	Butler	6 p.m.
9/7	@ North Dakota	6 p.m.
9/14	SE Louisiana	6 p.m.
9/21	@ Nebraska	TBA
9/28	North Dakota State	3 p.m.
10/5	S. Illinois (Hobo Day)	2 p.m.
10/12	@ Western Illinois	3 p.m.
10/19	@ Missouri State	1 p.m.
10/26	Northern Iowa	2 p.m.
11/9	Indiana State	2 p.m.
11/16	@ South Dakota	1 p.m.
11/23	@ Youngstown St.	1 p.m.

the way we wanted, but our passing game wasn't really there," Greger said. "We just want to be more balanced."

Not to mention as successful. That's the credo for the Jacks, Stiegelmeier said, keep moving forward.

"Any time you've been part of a program that appears to be moving in the right direction, people will be optimistic," he said. "Especially if the coaches do things right and present things right."

"We have a lot of guys back, so there's reason for optimism."

You can follow Jeremy Hoeck on Twitter at [twitter.com/jhoeck](http://twitter.com/jhoeck)

"There's a comfort in it, but there's a higher challenge, too."

If there was a challenge

for those players back, it would be how does Zenner repeat his sophomore season? The nation's leading

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Football			
9/6	Wisner-Pilger	7 p.m.	10/11 @ Lutheran High
9/13	@ Ponca	7 p.m.	Northeast
9/20	@ Stanton	7 p.m.	Battle Creek
9/27	Hartington Cedar Catholic (Homecoming)	7 p.m.	(Parents Night)
10/4	Homer	7 p.m.	@ West Holt
10/18			7 p.m.
10/24			7 p.m.
Volleyball			
9/5	Wynot Tourn.	5 p.m.	@ Norfolk Catholic/Lutheran
9/10	Hart. Cedar Catholic	7:30 p.m.	High Northeast noon
9/12	@ O'Neill	7:30 p.m.	Lutheran High NE
9/14	Boone Central-Newman Grove Tourn.	9 a.m.	West Holt
9/17	Boone Cent.-NG	7 p.m.	Wayne
9/19	Pierce	7:30 p.m.	Creighton
9/24	Laurel-Concord-Coleridge	7:30 p.m.	10/17 @ Guardian Angels Central Catholic (West Point)
9/26	@ Wisner-Pilger/Battle Creek	5 p.m.	10/21-22 Knox County Tourn. (Niobrara) TBD
10/28-11/1			Mid-State Conf. Tourn. TBD
Cross Country			
9/6	Don Baker Inv. (Vermillion)	3 p.m.	9/27 Crofton Inv.
9/13	Norfolk Catholic Inv.	3 p.m.	10/3 South Sioux City Inv.
9/20	O'Neill Inv.	3 p.m.	10/11 Mid-State Conference (Crofton)
			4:30 p.m.
Girls' Golf (Co-op with Hartington)			
9/30	Wayne Inv.	9 a.m.	9/21 Flornview Inv.
9/5	West Holt Inv.	9 a.m.	9/23 Home Triangular
9/12	Columbus Lakeview Inv.	9 a.m.	9/26 Metteer Inv. (Wayne)
9/14	Pierce Inv.	9 a.m.	9/28 Antelope CC Quad
9/16	O'Neill Inv.	10 a.m.	10/1 Mid-State Conference (Crofton)
9/19	Home Dual	4 p.m.	
			1 p.m.

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