

University of South Dakota Football Media Day



South Dakota running back Trevor Bouma stiff-arms a defender during a drill during practice on Tuesday at the DakotaDome in Vermillion.

JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D



South Dakota running back Jasper Sanders looks for running room during a drill in practice on Tuesday. Sanders, a senior, is back after missing all of the 2013 season due to injury.

JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

# Strength In Numbers

BY JEREMY HOECK  
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VERMILLION — How do you spread the wealth among five running backs capable of breaking off a big run at any time?

Welcome to life inside the University of South Dakota football program.

The Coyotes, coming off a 4-win season a year ago, boast a backfield that has not only been able to avoid injury — a rather big change from 2013 — but looks deep and explosive.

“We can be pretty good, but Kevin Earl can throw too, though,” senior running back Jasper Sanders said during Tuesday’s annual media day session at the DakotaDome in Vermillion.

“We can’t forget that,” he added with a smile.

Nor have the Coyotes forgotten what it was like to have limited options down the stretch.

Riddled with injury last season, USD’s backfield now boasts five eligible ball-carriers: Sanders (who missed all of 2013), sophomores Trevor Bouma and Jordan Roberts, and redshirt freshman Khorey Kilgore. The final spot will be either freshmen Clay Fisher or Shay Bratland.

“Choosing between four running backs, our coaches have to be excited about that,” Bouma said.

Bouma, of LeMars, Iowa, led the Coyotes with 164 rushes for 781 yards with three touchdowns, while Roberts, of Sheridan, Wyoming, added 126 carries for 544 yards and three scores.

Both are back (and healthy), while Kilgore and Sanders are also in the mix.

## video

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“The only problem that we really have is to figure out how to utilize everyone the best way,” Roberts said, “which is a good problem to have.”

One can never have enough offensive weapons, according to junior quarterback Earl.

“It’s never a bad thing to have too many running backs, because those guys need to be fresh,” said Earl, who averaged 211 passing yards in conference action a year ago.

“When they have fresh legs, they’re hard to tackle.”

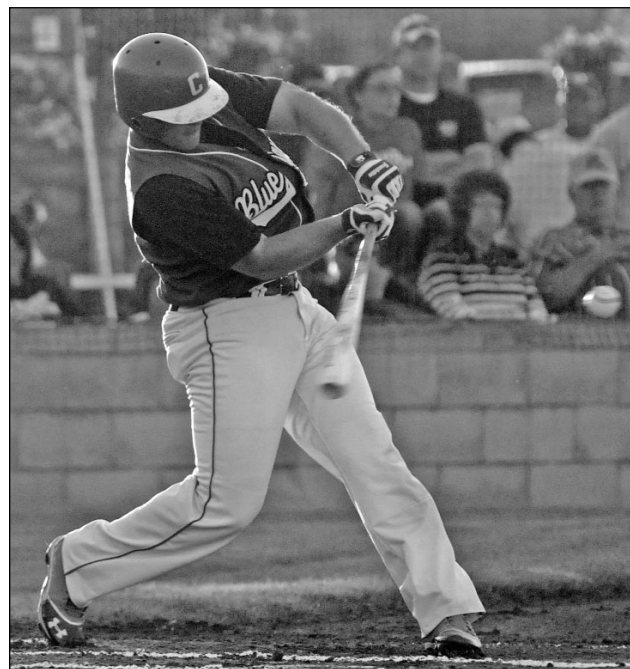
Having fresh legs was a bit of a concern a year ago for USD. The program lost two backs in pre-season practice with season-ending injury, and had to thrust Bouma and Roberts into full-time roles.

The Coyotes, at one time 4-3, lost their final five games, including a 42-

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# State Amateur: Huether Guides Irene Into Quarterfinals

## Making Contact



Crofton’s Rand Thygeson rips a first-inning single during the Blue-jays’ matchup with Lake Norden in the second round of the South Dakota State Class B American Legion Baseball Tournament on Tuesday at Mitchell’s Cadwell Park. The game was not completed by press time Tuesday night. Look for a full game story at [www.yankton.net](http://www.yankton.net).

JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

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EDITOR’S NOTE: The Irene Larchwood game finished late Monday night and didn’t appear in Tuesday’s paper.

MITCHELL — A 19-year-old amateur baseball newcomer rose to the occasion on the state’s biggest stage.

“Honestly, I was kind of nervous,” said Irene pitcher Jack Huether, who pitched into the ninth inning and allowed four hits in what he said later was the biggest game of his life.

“I’ve never pitched on this stage; at something this big before.”

Held hitless through five innings, the Irene Cardinals rallied for a 3-2 second round victory Monday night over Larchwood at the S.D. State Amateur Baseball Tournament in Mitchell.

The Cardinals, now 16-11, move to the quarterfinals to face fellow South Central League opponent Wynot on Thursday at 8 p.m.

Huether was front and center in the Irene victory.

The right-hander struck out six batters and overcame six walks — aided by his defense which didn’t commit an error.

“It was one of those nights for me where it went my way, I guess,” Huether said.

“This was one of the most fun things I’ve ever done.”

Irene, the third SCL team to advance to the final eight, took the lead in the top of the seventh inning and held on.

Tyler Edler, a pickup player from Lesterville, relieved Huether after a leadoff walk in the bottom of the ninth. Edler ended a double play and a fly out to end the game, beginning the celebration for Irene.

The talk later, understandably, centered on Huether.

“That was an unbelievable performance,” manager Kendall Johnke said. “He didn’t pitch much this season, but he came up big tonight.”

Huether fared fairly well in a district tournament loss to eventual champion Crofton, enough to “earn this one for sure,” Johnke said.

Larchwood’s first runs of the game came in the bottom of the third, when Keaton

Grevengoed slugged an RBI triple and Nick Meisinger hit an RBI sacrifice fly.

From that point, Huether settled down.

The former Viborg-Hurley prep standout didn’t allow a hit until the eighth inning, but he stranded two runners.

Irene finally broke through in the top of the sixth, getting a 2-run single from pickup player Tyler Edler to tie the game at 2-2.

Larchwood starter Kyle Jensen was relieved in the seventh after walking his sixth batter. The pinch runner, Brett Jensen, later scored on an infield error, giving the Cardinals a 3-2 lead.

Up next for Irene is a matchup with league and district rival Wynot, which beat Akron earlier Monday night.

What does that say about the SCL?

“It just shows how tough our district is,” Johnke said. “We can all win.”

You can follow Jeremy Hoeck on Twitter at [twitter.com/jhoeck](https://twitter.com/jhoeck). Discuss this story at [www.yankton.net](http://www.yankton.net).

# Iverson Signs Contract With Spanish Team

From P&D Staff Reports

Yankton High School graduate Colton Iverson has signed a one-year deal to play for a professional basketball team in Spain for the 2014-15 season, the team announced Tuesday.

The 7-foot center will play for Labor Kutxa, a member of the Euroleague.

Iverson, the No. 53 selection in the 2013 NBA Draft, played last season in Turkey, and recently played for the Boston Celtics in the NBA Summer League.

Boston will keep the rights to the 25-year-old Iverson, who played collegiately at Minnesota and Colorado State.

The Celtics currently have 18 players on their 2014-15 roster, which would make it unlikely he could find a roster spot.



Iverson

# Safety Valve: Vikings Turn To Veteran Crocker

MANKATO, Minn. (AP) — Health problems have piled up in recent weeks for the Minnesota Vikings at strong safety, already one of the iffiest positions on their roster.

Harrison Smith has the free safety spot in good hands, but a host of others lacking a standout have been competing to be the starter next to him. Then the Vikings signed Chris Crocker, and the outlook cleared up a bit.

“He’s kind of just come in and really been a calming storm with the injuries we’ve had back there at safety,” defensive coordinator George Edwards said.

When a 12-year veteran joins a team after the beginning of training camp, such a move can look desperate. Crocker obviously won’t be as fast at age 34 as he was at 25, but he’s had success in

coverage and blitzing.

Savviness is an important trait, too, particularly in this case with a new scheme under coach Mike Zimmer. Crocker has more than six seasons of experience in it, primarily with Zimmer as his defensive coordinator in Cincinnati.

“We’re trying to win ball-games right now, and you don’t really have a lot of time to wait and see,” Crocker said.

So instead of playing catch up, Crocker actually has a head start.

“I’m the older guy; been there, done that, seen it. So if I’m not able to come in and acclimate fast then I shouldn’t be here, I guess,” Crocker said.

Crocker was a late signing the past two years, too, not joining the Bengals until well

into September. He didn’t consider himself retired this time, either, but he wasn’t interested in starting over with a new system with a coach other than Zimmer.

“I don’t know how, but he has got me to play at a very high level throughout my career, and I’ve played my best football with him,” Crocker said. “So it’s just not smart to go somewhere else at this point. I want to end on a good note if this is my last year, or next year or whenever.”

Working his way back into game shape, with the weight of the helmet and pads, has been a challenge. The Vikings held Crocker out of the exhibition opener last Friday against Oakland to give him more time, but he’s on track to start next to Smith this Saturday against

Arizona.

“We know he’s a true pro. Great communicator back there. He has an extensive knowledge in this defensive scheme, so he’s not going to be surprised by what somebody offensively does schematically,” Edwards said.

Jamarca Sanford has started most of the games at this spot the past two years, but new coaching staffs always require players to prove their ability.

He’s been bothered by a back injury, too, as has Andrew Sendejo. Robert Blanton started camp with the first team, but Zimmer said this week he likely will miss another preseason game with hamstring trouble.

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# Packers’ Rodgers Readies For Preseason Debut

GREEN BAY, Wis. (AP) — Aaron Rodgers is expected to make his 2014 debut on Saturday.

After Rodgers missed the preseason opener at Tennessee that was played in a drenching rainstorm, Saturday’s game at St. Louis is more about seeing what the other guys around Rodgers do more than anything else.

“Really I’m more interested in what happens on the other side of his performance, particularly in the passing game,” coach Mike McCarthy said Tuesday. “But Aaron, he needs to get out there and play just like we do every year.”

The plan calls for Rodgers to get the most playing time in the second and third preseason games, though with relatively limited snaps.

“No, that was about the right amount,” he said with a slight smirk when asked about whether he needed more time this year.

Rodgers did more yoga as part of his offseason routine, something that the 30-year-old quarterback has said helps with flexibility as he gets older.

The 2011 NFL MVP might be having one of his best training camps yet of his nearly decade-long career.

A year after a left collarbone injury knocked him out for much of the second half of last season, Rodgers seems as sharp as ever in practice.

Yet it’s quite understandable what the top goal is for Rodgers and the Packers in August.

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