

NFL Films Delves Into Life Of Yankton College Great

‘A Football Life’ On Alzado To Air Nov. 21 On NFL Network

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK
james.cimburek@yankton.net

The NFL Films series “A Football Life” has featured the likes of Walter Payton and Tom Landry, as well as more contemporary players like Tim Tebow and Darrelle Revis. Later this year they will feature someone near and dear to many area football fans.

A crew from NFL Films was in Yankton on Tuesday and Wednesday to film interviews and do research for an hour-long piece on the late Lyle Alzado, the Yankton College great who went on to star in the NFL. The show will air Nov. 21 at 8 p.m. Central on the NFL Network.

“A Football Life is documentaries on people who had a very interesting life in football,” said NFL

Films supervising producer Neil Zender. “We really wanted to do one on Lyle Alzado because most people have forgotten him or don’t remember him, and the people that do remember him just think of steroids. It’s the first thing that comes to mind, and there’s a heckuva lot more to Lyle Alzado than steroids. He was a very interesting person, and the more you dig into him and research him, the more interesting and complicated he becomes.”

One thing that intrigued Zender early in the process was Alzado’s boxing exhibition with boxing legend Muhammad Ali in 1979.

“He wanted to fight Muhammad Ali in a boxing ring so bad that he mortgaged his own house to do it,” Zender said. “When you find out that somebody’s that type of per-

son, that would do something like that, it’s someone you want to do a show on to find out what makes him tick and why he’s the way that he was.”

Zender wanted footage of Yankton College, not just because it was where Alzado went to school and played, but because of what the YC campus is now.

“We wanted to go to Yankton to just get some footage of where he played in college and also show what’s happened to his college,” he said. “It’s an interesting and unique thing that you can’t say about many NFL players, that their college has now become a federal prison camp.”

The Yankton College alumni office, which remains open nearly 30 years after the institution closed in 1984, proved to be a valuable asset

for Zender.

“It’s very impressive, the archives that Yankton College has. I’ve been at NFL Films for 15 years, and the caliber and quality of their archives, it just blew me away,” he said. “It’s impressive the depth of material and the quality of the job they’ve done there. Yankton should be very proud of that.”

“You won’t find many NFL teams that have that level of detail in archiving everything.”

While Zender knew Alzado was an intimidating presence on the field, he entered the process not knowing what Alzado had dealt with off the field.

“What I didn’t realize was what an underdog that he was, and all the odds that he had to overcome and all the obstacles that were in his way,” Zender said. “He had a tough childhood. He didn’t have the best father in the world. He was not a

high draft pick in the National Football League. He didn’t come from a college that traditionally produced NFL players.”

While in Yankton, they also interviewed Alzado’s first wife Sharon, who still has ties to the community. Zender said that they have a few interviews left, but most have been completed.

“We’ve talked to his former teammates, like Tom Jackson of the Broncos and Howie Long with the Raiders. We’ve interviewed people he played against, like Joe Theismann. We’ve interviewed members of his family,” he said. “We’ve looked as closely as anybody’s ever looked into Lyle Alzado and his life, who he was, and we’ll be putting it to bed pretty quick.”

And while many use Alzado’s story as a warning for the dangers

ALZADO | PAGE 7A

Volleyball | S.D. High Schools

Area Teams Open Seasons

Scotland Clips Eagles In Five

WAKONDA — The Scotland Highlanders overcame a slow start to beat Irene-Wakonda 15-25, 24-26, 25-15, 25-20, 15-11 in the prep volleyball season opener for both squads.

Carley Skorepa had 15 kills, nine ace serves and 34 digs to lead Scotland. Jessica Thum finished with nine kills and 32 digs. Alex Conrad posted 18 assists and six ace serves for the Highlanders, who finished with 23 ace serves in the match. Shannon Fanning added 37 digs in the victory.

For Irene-Wakonda, Caitlin Hinseth led the way with 11 kills. Taylor Lee had five kills, seven digs and four ace serves. Adrianna McDonald added eight digs and five ace serves.

Scotland is off until a Sept. 8 match at Freeman. Irene-Wakonda is also at Freeman next, playing the Flyers on Tuesday.

Scotland won the JV match 25-11, 25-21.

SCOTLAND (1-0).....	15	24	25	25	15
IRENE-WAKONDA (0-1).....	25	26	15	20	11

Elk Point-Jefferson 3, S.C. West 1

ELK POINT — Miranda Stabe pounded out 14 kills and Drew Kueck had seven ace serves as Elk Point-Jefferson pounded past Sioux City (Iowa) West 21-25, 25-13, 25-8, 25-21 in prep volleyball action on Thursday.

Kueck also had eight kills and Stabe had three ace serves for EPJ. Amber Hanson had 26 assists, two ace serves and two blocks. Alicia Gregg had five kills and two blocks, and Alison Targonski had 10 digs and six ace serves in the victory.

EPJ, 1-0, travels to Dell Rapids for the Huskies’ Dakota XII Conference opener on Tuesday. Sioux City West faces in-town rival Sioux City North on Sept. 9.

SIUOX CITY WEST	25	13	8	21
ELK POINT-JEFFERSON (1-0)	21	25	25	25



JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

Irene-Wakonda’s Caitlin Hinseth and Scotland’s Alex Conrad go up for a ball at the net during their volleyball match on Thursday at Wakonda. The match was the season opener for both squads.

V-BALL | PAGE 7A

O’G Blanks Gazelles

SIoux FALLS — The Yankton Gazelles girls’ soccer team suffered its first setback of the 2014 season, dropping a 1-0 decision to Sioux Falls O’Gorman on Thursday at Yankton Trails Park.

O’Gorman, the defending South Dakota High School Activities Association champions, scored in the fourth minute. The Gazelles “stepped it up the rest of the game and played step-for-step,” according to head coach Tyler Schuring.

Next up for Yankton (1-1-1) is a home matchup with Mitchell on Tuesday.

O’Gorman also won the JV match 4-0. Sadie Fedders made 14 saves and Miranda Winterring had two saves in goal for Yankton. Jaiden Boomsma had two shots for the Gazelles, with Kasey Erickson recording the other.

Gymnastics Coach Out At Minnesota

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Minnesota women’s gymnastics coach Meg Stephenson has left the job in a “mutually agreed-upon resignation,” according to the university.

The Gophers announced Stephenson’s departure Thursday, citing two investigations into student and employee complaints about the program. Athletic director Norwood Teague said the investigations have been completed, after which the department took “prompt and appropriate action” in response.

The university said there’s an open complaint with the federal Office for Civil Rights related to the program. The Star Tribune (<http://strib.mn/1qMEgll>) reported that the complaint alleges sexual harassment of a student by a volunteer assistant coach on the team and that the university failed to address the situation effectively.

Stephenson guided the Gophers to three top-10 finishes at the NCAA championships and the last two Big Ten titles.

Early Arrival Helps Jessen Settle In At USD

BY JEREMY HOECK
jeremy.hoeck@yankton.net

VERMILLION — Brittany Jessen was so anxious to get a jump-start on her first season of college volleyball that she arrived seven months early.

The goal for the freshman setter at the University of South Dakota? To avoid early-season obstacles typically faced by newcomers to the collegiate level.

“That was a great decision,” said Jessen, a 5-foot-9 native of Mendota Heights, Minnesota, who inherits the setter position — the only one on the roster — for the Coyotes.

“It’ll make the fall go so much more smoothly for everyone.”

Jessen, who graduated with her high school’s record for kills (410) in a season and over 1,000 career assists, walked into a USD program who needed an instant impact player at setter.

The Coyotes, 19-13 a season ago, graduated four-year

starter Tori Kroll, who like Jessen was a highly-touted freshman back in 2010.

“It was big shoes to fill, but I came here in January, so that helped me a ton,” Jessen said. “Being here earlier, I was able to get used to the system.”

By graduating from Henry Sibley High School early, Jessen — an honorable mention all-state selection in Minnesota’s highest class — was able to play with the Coyotes throughout their spring season, and then all summer with the team.

The reaction from her new teammates? Awe.

“I can’t even wait until she’s a senior, she’s going to be unstoppable,” said junior outside hitter Sydney Dimke.

“She has room to improve, but she’s already ready to set at the Division I level.”

There was one obstacle, however, that Jessen had to work through, but she wasn’t alone in that challenge.

Former USD head coach Matt Houk left this spring for an assistant coaching posi-

tion at Minnesota, leaving assistant Leanne Williamson to take the reins — Williamson was eventually given the job on a permanent basis.

Williamson, then, inherited a roster that returns six starters (highlighted by Summit League Player of the Year Kendall Kritenbrink, a senior outside hitter) and was working in a freshman setter.

“She’s kind of the epitome of what a coach wants in a player,” Williamson said of Jessen. “She asks a ton of questions, and she takes feedback really well.”

A big part of that feedback came not from coaches, but from teammates.

“She did a really good job right away, she put the team before her,” Dimke said. “She’s a really selfless setter.”

As is normally the case with a freshman in any sport, there will likely be some rough patches right away, Williamson said.

“She’ll still have her moments as a freshman, but she’s a learner of the game; she wants to get better,”

Williamson said. “She says all the time, (EI) want to have a great year because I want the seniors to have a great year.”

“That’s the team attitude we really like.”

By arriving in Vermillion in January, though, Jessen may have gotten an early chance to iron out any first-year issues, she pointed out.

“My month to get ready was in January and February,” Jessen said with a smile.

On the other hand, the final weekend in August will give Jessen an early taste of high-level D-I volleyball.

The Coyotes travel to Green Bay, Wisconsin, this weekend for the Green Bay Country Inn & Suites Tournament. USD will open with Arizona today (Friday), and will face Kansas State and Green Bay on Saturday.

Not the best way to ease into a freshman season, but Jessen was adamant that her teammates have prepared her for that level of play.

“They were super welcom-

JESSEN | PAGE 7A



ALAN DALE/VERMILLION PLAIN TALK

South Dakota setter Brittany Jessen, 2, finds teammate Sydney Dimke, 17, with a backset during the Coyotes’ preseason scrimmage on Saturday. Jessen will start at setter for USD, which opens its 2014 season Friday.