

Golf | Hillcrest Invitational Pro-Am Notebook

Illinois Pro Returns To Tournament He Won In 2011



JEREMY HOECK/P&D
Joe Vig of Yankton chips on to the No. 11 green during Thursday's round at the Hillcrest Invitational Pro-Am, at Hillcrest Golf & Country Club.

BY MICHAEL HAMMOND
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The 42nd annual Hillcrest Invitational Pro-Am began Thursday in Yankton, with groups of three amateurs and one professional teaming up to win the tournament.

Professional golfer Josh Esler, of Wakonda, Illinois won the Hillcrest Pro-Am in 2011 and is returning to try and win the event again this year.

Esler has conditional status on the Web.com Tour and mainly competes in Monday Qualifiers as well as other Pro-Am events. Winning the event in 2011 allowed him to automatically qualify into this year's tournament.

Esler teed off at 7:30 a.m. on Thursday morning and was able to shoot 3-under for his round and hopes to win the tournament this year.

"There is a lot of golf left and you have to take it one day at a time," Esler said. "I am off to an OK start, but three more rounds to go, just try to chip away and get to that number."

"I would like to be in contention again, that would be good."

Each professional golfer is teamed up with three amateur golfers, and Esler enjoyed playing with his group.

"We had fun today and I think we did ok," Esler said.

Esler and his group will tee off at 12:20 p.m. today (Friday) for their second round of the tournament.

Pro Golfers like Hillcrest Course

Professional golfer Kurt Watkins, of Chandler, Arizona, who plays on the Dakotas' Tour and plays in Monday Qualifiers for the Web.com Tour, is playing in the Hillcrest Pro Am in for the first time and has enjoyed being on the course and in Yankton.

"It's good," Watkins said. "The first two days (qualifying) the greens were a bit slower, but today they have really sped up and the fairways

photos

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are in great shape.

"My girlfriend's family is from here, so I thought it would be a good chance to come up and visit, it's been great, and Yankton is a pretty town."

Josh Esler likes the course and the challenge it brings.

"It's good, every year it is good," Esler said. "It is challenging, short, and kind of tricky, but it is a good course."

Yankton's Jay Batcheller, an amateur, also had a comment on the course.

"It is a beautiful course and they have it looking good this year," Batcheller said. "It's pretty hard to hold the greens but the scoring is out there if you can hold the ball."

Yankton Group Teams Up

Jay Batcheller, Mick Carda, and Paul Eichfeld from Yankton, have teamed up for the Hillcrest Pro-Am as a way to golf together for a week. Joining the Yankton group is professional golfer San Osborne, of Can-

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Baseball | S.D. State Amateur Tour.

Alexandria Tops Freeman 8-2

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK
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MITCHELL — A season ago, Brett Scherschligt stymied the Alexandria Angels in the championship of the South Dakota State Class B Amateur Baseball Tournament.

On Thursday the Angels were ready for him.

Alexandria quickly answered a 1-0 deficit, then built on the lead from there for an 8-2 victory over Freeman in the opening round of the 2015 state tournament on Thursday at Mitchell's Cadwell Park.

Scherschligt, picked up by Wynot last season, scattered seven hits in a complete game effort as Wynot beat the Angels 8-2 in the 2014 title game. That experience helped the Angels be more prepared this time around, said Alexandria manager Chris Marek.

"He's not a pitcher that's going to beat you because of his stuff. He makes you chase," he said of Scherschligt. "Playing him last year, we had a better approach at the plate."

Cory Marek went 3-3 and Cole Wenande doubled and singled to lead Alexandria. Peyton Smith and Thomas Gullede also had two hits each for the Angels, who out-hit Freeman 11-5.

"They're not a team that's going to hit you around," said Brett Scherschligt, the Black Sox manager. "But we gave them way too many opportunities. I hit four batters, we had four errors..."

"Against a team like that, it will kill you."

Brett Scherschligt doubled and singled to lead the Freeman offense. Jake Weier, Christian Wolfgang and Allan Scherschligt had the other Black Sox hits.

Trever Vermeulen went the distance, striking out nine, for the win. Brett Scherschligt took the loss, striking

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JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D
Freeman's Jake Weier slides home ahead of a throw to Alexandria catcher Chris Marek during their first-round matchup in the South Dakota State Amateur Baseball Tournament on Thursday at Mitchell's Cadwell Park.

Garretson Edges Crofton 2-1

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK
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MITCHELL — The Garretson Bluejays only strung consecutive hits together of Crofton Bluejays pitcher Rand Thygeson once in their opening round game of the South Dakota State Amateur Baseball Tournament.

Unfortunately for Crofton, once was enough.

Nolan Luhmann's two-out two-run single in the seventh was all the offense Garretson would need in a 2-1 victory over Crofton, eliminated the South Central League squad that was a semifinal qualifier a season ago.

Garretson pitcher Patrick Whetham, who took a shutout into the ninth, credited getting on the same page with catcher Nick Sehr, a pickup player from Canton, with helping him settle into a groove.

"Nick did a heckuva job of calling the game," Whetham said. "We were on the

same page the whole time."

Whetham struck out four and allowed seven hits. Rand Thygeson was a tough-luck loser, striking out eight and allowing seven hits. Both runs against Thygeson were unearned.

"Randy pitched a great game," said Crofton manager Carl Schieffer. "I wish we could have scored a few runs for him."

Nick Bonte had two hits for Garretson, with Luhmann, Austin Van Hove, Sehr, Sam Johnson and Jesse Brockhouse each recording a hit.

For Crofton, Aaron Losing had two hits and Tyler Zimmerman doubled to lead the way. Matt Hames had a hit and a RBI. Nick Hegge, Thygeson and Brandon Hegge each had a hit in the effort.

Neither team got a runner to third until the fourth inning, when Thygeson and Losing had back-to-back singles, but Whetham got a strikeout and induced a grounder to

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JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D
Crofton second baseman Alex Mueller sends the ball to first base during the Bluejays' matchup with Garretson in the first round of the South Dakota State Amateur Baseball Tournament on Thursday at Mitchell's Cadwell Park.

USD Men Get Commit From Minn. Guard

BY JEREMY HOECK
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The University of South Dakota men's basketball team has nabbed a commit from a big guard in a big-time Minnesota AAU program.

Tyler Peterson, a 6-foot-4 guard from Centennial High School (Circle Pines, Minnesota), announced Thursday that he has committed to USD and will join the Coyote program in 2016-17.

"The relationship I had with the coaching staff has been great," Peterson told the Press & Dakotan on Thursday. "I could tell they wanted me there. They've been very easy to deal with."

Peterson, who has already scored over 1,000 points in his career, again played with Howard Pulley, an Elite Youth Basketball League (EYBL) summer team — and one that has consistently produced future college (and at times,

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'Brand New' Coyotes Hit The Field For First Time



ELYSE BRIGHTMAN/VERMILLION PLAIN TALK
Freshman quarterback Austin Simmons throws a pass during drills at the first day of practice for the University of South Dakota football team Thursday afternoon.

BY JEREMY HOECK
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VERMILLION — There can't be much gleaned from one football practice.

Progress, however, has already been seen away from the field and now it's time to translate that to success on the field, according to University of South Dakota senior linebacker Keyen Lage.

The Coyotes, who held their first practice Thursday afternoon in Vermillion, are ready to turn a corner.

"Every team says every year they're a new team, but this is probably the first time since I've been here that it actually feels like a brand new team," said Lage, a third-year starter from Sioux Falls.

Why?
"I feel like we're all calmer, not as jittery," Lage said. "We're ready to be out there."

There were 95 players — the limit — at Thursday's first practice, and for those guys coming back from a disappointing 2014 season (0-8 in conference games), the biggest change has been mental,

Lage said.

"Physically, we had the athletes to compete, the problem has been, it's almost like we got used to the losing culture," he said. "Guys are starting to buy into the winning culture."

"We all know that losing can't be something that's acceptable."

Head coach Joe Glenn liked the attitude change to the 1969 movie 'Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid' — keeping his trend of western-themed analogies rolling right along.

"They were being chased by the law, and they looked back and said, 'Who are those guys?'" Glenn said of the film. "That's how I want us to be."

"When we're getting after someone this year, and we're not going away, the other team will be saying, 'Who are those guys?'"

What Glenn hopes those guys become are winners. The Coyotes won two games last season and are 3-21 since joining the Missouri Valley Football Conference in 2012.

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