

Season Preview | USD Volleyball

Coyotes Will Boast Different Feel This Season

BY JEREMY HOECK
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VERMILLION – Will the third time be the charm for the University of South Dakota volleyball team?

If the memories of last year are any indication, the new-look Coyotes may be trending that direction.

After falling just short of a regular season title, USD then went on to lose in the Summit League tournament semifinals for a second straight year. “Devastation” is how second-year head coach Leanne Williamson refers to the feeling of her players.

“They could taste it, but it just didn’t go our way,” said Williamson, whose team opens its season at a Wyoming tournament this weekend in Laramie.

“There’s definitely that hunger there, and the passion to get back to that point.”

A new cast of leaders, however, will be in charge of guiding the Coyotes (19-12 last season) back to familiar territory: Near the top of the Summit League.

Gone is Kendall Kritenbrink, a 499-kill weapon that may go down as

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COACH LEANNE WILLIAMSON

the best volleyball player in school history. Also gone are Melissa Firtko and Riley Haug, who played key roles in developing the program to regular contender status.

Now it will be up to a new group to carry that torch.

“We’re definitely different,” Williamson said.

The biggest thing the Coyotes had to avoid during pre-season practices, Williamson said, was the temptation to want to force 400 kills onto one player.

“We’re not trying to replace the people we’re missing but find a different way that’s going to work for this team,” she said. “People will notice right away that we’ll be almost the opposite of last year.”

How?

Instead of looking for one main offensive option to keep the Coyotes in a match – or rally them back – there

will be a renewed focus on defense. A focus on stopping teams exactly like them from a year earlier.

The Coyotes return four starters, including Sydney Dimke (Sr., OH, 298 kills, 71 blocks), Kelsey Biltoft (Sr., MB, 140 kills, 102 blocks), Audrey Reeg (Jr., OH, 284 kills, 22 aces, 382 digs) and Brittany Jessen (So., Setter, 1277 assists, 156 kills).

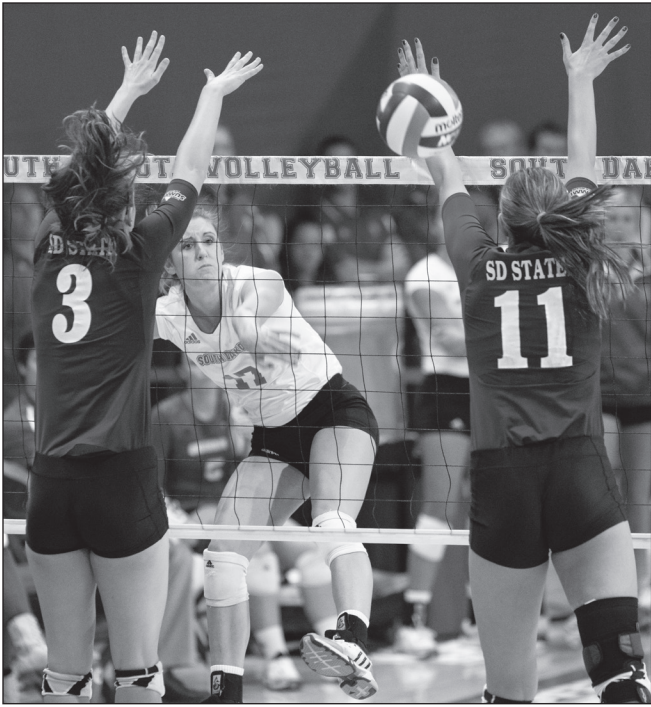
Also out on the court will be Kaitlyn Hastings (Sr., DS), Haley Jorgensen (Jr., OH, Hurley), Lindsey Brown (Jr., MB), as well as a group of other sophomores and perhaps some of the five freshmen.

So, it’s not as though the Coyotes are completely rebuilding from scratch.

“It’s refreshing to know it’s not a whole new team, that we’ve got some experience,” Williamson said.

Which will come in handy through another tough schedule.

Williamson, who was on staff of former coach Matt Houk (now at Minnesota), has continued the program’s trend of getting into pre-season tournaments that feature big-name



VERMILLION PLAIN TALK FILE PHOTO
University of South Dakota senior Sydney Dimke (center), shown during a home match last season, will lead the Coyotes who open their 2015 campaign this weekend.

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College Football | USD Coyotes

Freshmen Bringing Speed

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VERMILLION – When Joe Glenn took over the University of South Dakota football program in 2011, he inherited a roster that had 12 players from the state of Florida.

By the 2014 season, that number was down to four.

And following a 2-win season (none coming in the Missouri Valley Football Conference) in 2015, there was a sense that the Coyotes could use some speed – as Glenn puts it, guys that have “another gear.”

So far, it appears that USD has exactly that among the six recruits it brought it in from the Sunshine State.

“They’re all fast guys,” Glenn said after Monday’s practice in Vermillion, as he jotted down notes on a roster about three freshmen in particular.

Of the freshmen on the roster, two from Florida have emerged as candidates to play this season: Michael Fredrick (RB, Miami) and Shamar Jackson (RB/WR, Pahokee).

“Not that I’d call it a surprise, because we knew they were good recruits, but we hadn’t recruited in Florida for quite a while,” Glenn said.

The Coyotes realized, though, that in order to take a step forward, the regional recruiting base might need to be expanded for some quickness – especially considering USD’s longest play from scrimmage last year was 43 yards.

And so, six new Florida players are in Vermillion, giving USD a total of eight on the roster from that state. The other incoming freshmen include Jovane Parkinson (DB), Luis Peguero (DL), Eric Saintil (WR) and Samy JeanClaude (DL).

“They recruited a lot of speed,” the 5-foot-8, 160-pound Jackson said, smiling. “That’s what they wanted the most, so that’s what we wanted to bring to the table.”

Even if it meant for those players to travel halfway across the nation to a town of 10,000 residents.

“When I first committed, I didn’t think anyone from Florida was up here. Now



Rookies Stepping Up For Coyotes

ABOVE: University of South Dakota freshman running back Michael Fredrick takes the ball from quarterback Brian Woodward during Monday afternoon’s practice in Vermillion.

RIGHT: University of South Dakota freshman running back Shamar Jackson, left, hangs on the ball between two defenders during Monday afternoon’s practice in Vermillion.

PHOTOS BY JEREMY HOECK/P&D



Worker Falls To Death At Vikings Stadium Site

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — A construction worker plunged about 50 feet to his death at the Minnesota Vikings’ new stadium site Wednesday morning while a second worker with him was seriously injured.

Officials were still trying to determine how the accident happened, said John Wood, senior vice president with Mortenson Construction, the general contractor overseeing the \$1 billion-plus project. The man who died, an employee of Berwald Roofing Co., fell from the edge of the roof into a snow gutter on the north side of U.S. Bank Stadium about 45 minutes into his shift and was pronounced dead on arrival at a nearby hospital, Wood said.

Another man from the same subcontractor was injured on the roof but did not fall from it, Wood said, adding that the circumstances of how he got hurt also weren’t immediately known. He also said he didn’t know the extent of that worker’s injuries.

Wood said investigators were still determining what kind of work the two men were doing, whether they were wearing harnesses or other safety gear at the time, or whether such equipment was required where the men were working.

“This is a very tragic day in the life of the stadium construction project,” Wood said at a news conference.

The names of the two men were not immediately released. A woman answering the phone at Berwald Roofing said nobody was available to comment.

Operations were suspended for the day, leaving huge cranes standing idle over the site of the former Metrodome on the eastern edge of downtown Minneapolis. About 1,200 men and women work on the project and they all held “a very somber gathering” after the accident, he said.

In a statement, the Vikings called the accident “extremely sad” and offered thoughts and prayers for the family of the dead worker, the injured man who remained hospital-

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Ciara Duffy (left), of St. Thomas More, defends an Elk Point-Jefferson player during the 2015 S.D. State Class A Girls’ Basketball Tournament. Duffy, who was garnering interest from a number of big-time Division I schools, verbally committed Tuesday to play basketball at the University of South Dakota.

P&D FILE PHOTO



STM’s Duffy Reflects On USD Decision

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Ciara Duffy was sitting in the vehicle with her family when she came to a major realization. She was ready to decide on a college.

The reaction from her sister, Caitlin, was one of surprise: “Are you serious?”

Yes, Ciara was sure. She wanted to attend the University of South Dakota.

Spurning offers from a handful of big-name Division I schools, the 6-foot-1 St. Thomas More senior standout went back inside the DakotaDome on Sunday and informed head coach Amy Williams of her decision to play for the Coyotes.

“By the end of the visit, I was definitely sure I wanted to go there,” Ciara told the *Press & Dakotan* on Wednesday night.

Ciara, who has helped St. Thom-

as More win back-to-back Class A state basketball titles, chose USD over the interest of schools such as DePaul, Wake Forest, Missouri State, Wyoming and Colorado.

It was the connection she developed with the Coyote coaching staff that ultimately led her to decide on USD – where her sister, Caitlin, also happens to play basketball.

“I had the privilege to get to meet a lot of great coaches and form some great relationships, but in the end, I just really connected with coach Williams and the staff,” Ciara said.

The fourth of eight children born to Dan and Karrie Duffy, Ciara averaged 17.5 points, 5.5 rebounds, 3.6 assists and 3.4 steals last season as a junior. She earned first team Class A all-state honors after leading the Cavaliers to their second straight championship – their third in four years.

When it came time to finalize her college decision, Ciara joked that it certainly didn’t hurt that sister Caitlin – who originally went to Colorado State out of high school – was already at USD. Caitlin will be a senior in her sister’s freshman season (2016-17).

“I have to admit, we’re really close,” Ciara said, chuckling. “That did end up being a factor. I’m excited to have one year with her.”

The fact that one of the state’s top basketball talents has decided to stay in South Dakota certainly isn’t a new occurrence (USD and South Dakota State both have a handful of in-state products), but it speaks well of the two Division I programs, Duffy’s high school coach said.

“I think it’s great for the state, and certainly great for coach Wil-

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