



P&D FILE PHOTO

Elk Point-Jefferson's Lexie Branson, 2, goes up for a block during the South Dakota State Class A Volleyball Tournament last month. Branson, who set a state tournament record with 1.83 blocks per game, was one of eight players named first-team all-state by the South Dakota Volleyball Coaches Association. Devon Brecke and Jessa Doom of state runner-up Wagner were named to first team, both repeat selections. Platte-Geddes senior Kellee Griese was also named to the first team.

Record-Setters Pace Class A All-State Team

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK
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Two players who set the modern standard for their specialty during the South Dakota State Class A Volleyball Tournament were among the eight players named to the Class A All-State first team by the South Dakota Volleyball Coaches Association.

Sioux Falls Christian's Claire Assam, who averaged 1.5 ace serves per game during the state tournament, and Elk Point-Jefferson's Lexie Branson, who posted 1.83 blocks per game at state, highlight the elite list for 2011.

Also named to the first team were Sioux Falls Christian's Haley McCarron, Wagner's Devon Brecke and Jessa Doom, Gregory's Taylor Anshutz, Moberg-Pollock's Kassy Keller and Platte-Geddes' Kellee Griese.

Assam's aces were a key part of the Chargers' defense of their Class A title. The 5-9 senior outside hitter racked up 160 of them in 450 serves during the regular season, then added another 18 during three state tournament matches, breaking the mark of 1.1 aces per game, set by Milbank's Megan Nedved in 2008.

"She has been working very hard on her jump serve, and she served very well for us," said Chargers head coach Darci Wassenaar. "Her tough serve has led to a lot of runs."

Assam, a second-team all-state selection a year ago, also had 241 kills, 33 blocks and 311 digs during the season. At state, she finished with 30 kills, 41 digs and three blocks.

"She is very athletic and has great court presence. She can do so much with the ball," Wassenaar said of the four-year varsity player. "She's such a smart player on the outside."

Branson added nearly 50 percent to her season block total in the span of one weekend, recording 22 blocks in three matches to break the mark set by 2010 Summit League Player of the Year Kelli Fiegen (Parkston, 2007), now at South Dakota State. Branson also pounded out 54 kills for a tournament-leading 4.5 kills per game.

"Her play at state showed everyone what she can do," said EPJ coach Traci Kollbaum.

During the regular season, Branson had 295 kills and 48 blocks, and was a senior anchor for a young Huskies squad.

"Her energetic attitude carried the team. Every play she makes, she wears it in her body language and on her face," Kollbaum said. "What I liked was that she made sure everyone believed in themselves out there."

McCarron was also a state tournament statistical leader for SFC, averaging 10.5 assists per game. She

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IPFW Holds Off USD Women

FORT WAYNE, Ind. — The South Dakota women's basketball team cut a 14-point second-half deficit to two in the final minute but the Coyotes' rally fell short in a 65-63 loss to Indiana-Purdue-Fort Wayne in Summit League play Thursday night in Fort Wayne, Ind.

The loss spoiled the Summit League debut to the Coyotes, who fell to 4-1 overall and 0-1 in conference play.

Senior forward Amber Hegge (Crofton, Neb.) had her first double-double of the season with 21 points and 11 rebounds. Senior guard Annie Roche (Vermillion) added 15 points on 5-of-8 three-point shooting. Junior guard Alexis Yackley had seven assists to go with seven points, while senior center Jodie Boss had four blocks.

The Mastodons (3-4, 1-0 Summit) shot 50 percent from the field (24-of-48). South Dakota shot 39.3 percent from the field, including only 29.6 percent from three-point range (8-of-27). The Coyotes shot just 30.3 percent in the first half, hitting 10-of-33 field goals.

"It's a tough loss. We left some things out there," South Dakota head coach Ryn Williams said. "We played hard, but we seemed to be a little tentative and hesitant early on. That is uncharacteristic of us."

The Coyotes were down 58-44 with 7:47 left in the game before beginning their rally. They went on a 10-0 run — sparked by threes from Roche and Yackley — to cut the lead to 58-54 with 5:19 left.

IPFW stretched the lead to 61-

54, but the Coyotes closed within 63-60 with 1:12 left on a Boss layup. The Coyotes had a chance to tie in the final 30 seconds after forcing an IPFW turnover, but they turned the ball over themselves. After a foul, IPFW's Erin Murphy hit two free throws to push the lead to 65-60. Roche hit a three in the final second but the rally fell short as the Mastodons held on for a two-point win.

"You've got to play through some bad luck sometimes. You are going to have to play through that on the road," Williams said. "For the most part, we did a nice job of playing with some poise. We just came up a little short tonight."

South Dakota lead 9-6 with 14:59 left in the first half — with Hegge scoring six points and Roche adding a three — but managed just one point over the next seven minutes as IPFW went on a 12-1 run to take an 18-10 lead.

The Coyotes got off to a miserable start shooting the ball, hitting just 4-of-19 (21.11 percent) of their attempts in the first 12:30 of the contest.

IPFW stretched the lead to 10 twice — but each time, Freshman Taylor Moore drained a three-pointer to bring the Coyotes within seven, including one with 3:37 left that cut the Mastodon lead to 27-20.

Those threes by Moore were part of a 15-7 Coyote run over the final 5:26 of the half that brought

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USD Men Fall In Summit League Debut

ROCHESTER, Mich. — A fast start by Oakland University proved to be the difference as it posted a 101-83 victory over the University of South Dakota in the Coyotes' Summit League debut.

With the loss, the Coyotes fell to 2-4 on the year and 0-1 in league play, while Oakland improved to 5-2 and 1-0 in conference play.

The Coyotes were led by three players in double figures as senior Louie Krogman posted as season-high 26 points on 9 of 17 from the field and 3 of 10 from beyond the arc to go along with a perfect 5 for 5 from the line. Sophomore Trevor Gruis had a season-high 20 points on 7 of 10 from the field and 6 of 7 from the line with a team-high eight

rebounds, while senior Charlie Westbrook chipped in 19 points.

Oakland was led by 28 points from Travis Bader who was 10 of 16 from the field, including 8 of 13 from beyond the arc. He led four players in double figures as Drew Valentine narrowly missed a double-double with 18 points and nine rebounds, while Reggie Hamilton added 16 points and the conference's leading rebounder, Corey Petros, had 10 points and 10 rebounds.

From the opening tip, the Grizzlies caught fire as Bader hit three quick triples to put OU up 11-2 early as it started 4 of 5 from the field. Bader added his fourth triple for an 18-4 lead less than four minutes into the game.

"That kid can really shoot, he has done that to a lot of people, he has great size and it's hard to get up and contest him and we really couldn't stop their physical ability early," head coach Dave Boots said. "I do like how some of our kids competed tonight, we were a bit short-handed without Ricardo (Andreotti) who is our best defender and rebounder and Steve (Tecker) broke his nose in the game."

Krogman knocked down two charity tosses cutting the deficit to 22-10 with 13 minutes remaining in the half. After the Coyotes hit their first bucket of the game, they went cold going just 1 for their next 12, while Oakland started 10 of 17, including 4 of 7 from beyond the arc.

The Coyotes settled down and a nice dish by Krogman to an open Westbrook in transition brought the Coyotes within 31-13 with 8:34 remaining in the half. Krogman followed with his first triple in eight tries off an offensive rebound by Gruis as the Coyotes cut the deficit to 18 at 36-18 moments later.

Another triple and jumper by Krogman and Westbrook, respectively, brought the Coyotes within 38-23 with four minutes remaining in the half. An and-one and a triple by junior Jordan Boots brought the Coyotes within 14 at 51-37 with 31.4 seconds remaining in

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Crofton Claims Opener



JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

Cedar Catholic's Katelyn Dickes dives to try to knock the ball away from Crofton's Allison Arens during their girls' basketball game Thursday in Crofton, Neb.

Wagner Tops Bon Homme To Start Season

WAGNER — The Wagner Red Raiders used five pins to down Wagner 46-30 in Southeast South Dakota Conference wrestling action Thursday.

Sage Zephier (120), David Kocer (145), Trevor Lensing (160), Derek Dickerson (170) and Dakota Zephier (195) each won by pin for Wagner.

Nick Dion (113), Tyler Dion (126) and Austin Soukup (138) also scored victories. Four-time state champion Alex Kocer won by forfeit for the Red Raiders.

For Bon Homme, Durkin Stoebner (106), Lincoln Stoebner (132), Blase Vanacek (182) and Ezra Bartlett (220) each won by pin.

106 — Durkin Stoebner B pin, Dawson Patrick; 113

— Nick Dion W maj, dec. Alex Caba 10-7; 120 — Sage Zephier W pin, Tristen Kiestler; 126 — Tyler Dion W maj, dec. Dillon Manas 9-1; 132 — Lincoln Stoebner B pin, Andrew Soukup; 138 — Austin Soukup W dec. Austin Kaul 3-1; 145 — David Kocer W pin, Dustin Cuka; 152 — Alex Kocer W by forfeit; 160 — Trevor Lensing W pin, Thomas Milzer; 170 — Derek Dickerson W pin, Lucas Crownover; 182 — Blase Vanacek B pin, Jacob Kvigney; 195 — Dakota Zephier W pin, Alan Hastaja; 220 — Ezra Bartlett B pin, Elijah Heath; 265 — Bradon Klinnert B by forfeit

Sioux Falls Lincoln 50, Madison 27

MADISON — Sioux Falls

Lincoln claimed a 50-27 victory over Madison in prep wrestling action Thursday.

Sky Castilleja (120), Ryan O'Connor (126), Tyler Norlund (132), Landon Strond (138), Peter Bardeson (145), Kevin Diaz (152) and Hunter DeGraw (285) won by pin for Lincoln. Michael McComish (160) and Tyler Curry (182)

won by pin for Madison.

106 — Bailey Morris M dec, Hunter O'Connor 8-4; 113 — Kaiden Dorris M maj, dec. Robiel Testalde 21-6; 120 — Sky Castilleja L pin, DJ Redin 0-21; 126 — Ryan O'Connor L pin, Johnny Monroe 3-51; 132 — Tyler Norlund L pin, Wyatt Fender 1-17; 138 — Landon Strond L pin, Colin Johnson 0-41; 145 — Peter Bardeson L pin, Brandon VanRosendale 3-10; 152 — Kevin Diaz L pin, Tyler Lensing 1-13; 160 — Michael McComish M pin, Seth Hager 3-04; 170 — Tyler Heeren M dec, Rick Lund 2-0; 182 — Tyler Curry M pin, Jared Hamilton 2-45; 195 — Jordan Shoerock M dec, Josh Westley 6-1; 220 — Blake Gusso M by forfeit; 265 — Hunter DeGraw L pin, Ayson Jones 4-43

Yankton Boys' Hockey Makes Varsity Debut Tonight

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK
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For the 14 boys that will be skating for the Yankton Miracle hockey team in 2011-12, it's going to be a busy winter.

With Yankton making its varsity hockey debut this season, those boys will be playing both a varsity and a junior varsity schedule, giving them plenty of ice time to hone their skills.

"I'm kinda excited, kinda nervous," said Mike Stoll, who coached the JV program from its infancy and will now serve as mentor for the varsity program. "We'll be playing at a different level. The teams we face will have more speed and more experience, and we're going in with a younger team."

Yankton made the jump to varsity at the same time as Sioux Center, giving South Dakota 10 teams in the highest division.

"We were waiting to see what Sioux Center was going to do," Stoll noted. "We went in knowing that we had a big group in Bantams that will be moving up next year."

"It will be hectic this year, but next year will be better."

Dawson Johnson, who spent his summer playing in North Dakota, highlights a quartet of seniors for the Miracle.

"Dawson played the summer on a select team, then had the opportunity to give up his senior year and play in Montana or Wyoming," Stoll noted. "He chose to come back and finish his senior year."

Johnson had two goals and two assists last season. Andrew Kotalik (2 assists), Lukas Treftz and goalie Austin Davis also return as seniors for the Miracle.

Anthony Wiener (4 goals, 9 assists), the team's top returning scorer, highlights a strong junior class. Also back are Tyler Stoll (1 goal, 3 assists), Tyler Johnson (3 assists), Adam Spencer (1 goal), Austin Reining and Logan Van Winkel (1 goal).

"The junior class has a lot of kids that will benefit from this season," Coach Stoll noted. "They are going to get a lot of experience this year."

Sophomore Isaac Althoff, a goalie for the Bantam squad a year ago, Logan Megard and Landon Withrow move up to varsity from the Bantam level this season, as does freshman Mitch Vavra.

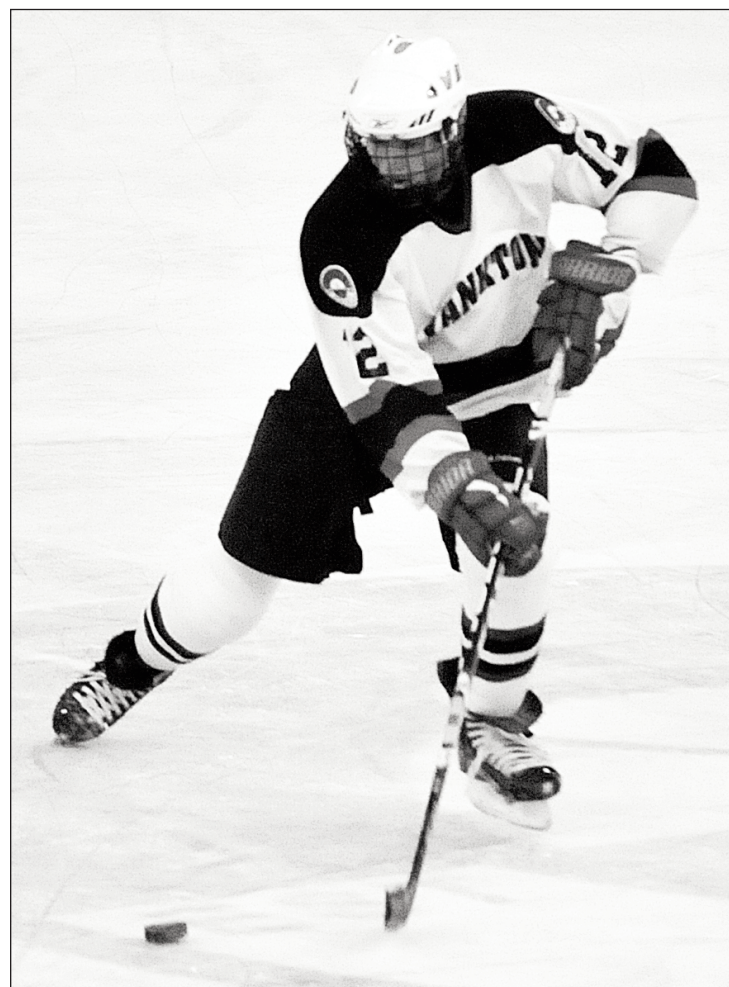
With only 14 players on the combined varsity and JV roster, the team will need everyone to contribute on the ice, even the backup goalie.

"One of our goalies will have to skate at times," Stoll noted. "JV and varsity, they'll be the same kids."

While Stoll expects the team to take some lumps in their first varsity season, he is hoping the experience and doubled ice time helps build the squad for the future.

"Hopefully we can win some JV games. We might get lucky and win some varsity games, too," he said. "I think it should be fun."

Yankton opens its inaugural season of varsity hockey tonight (Friday) at Brookings.



P&D FILE PHOTO

Yankton's Anthony Wiener controls the puck during a JV boys' home hockey match last season. Yankton will field a varsity hockey team for the first time, and its season begins tonight (Friday) in Brookings.