

# Top Sports Stories Of 2011

## A CHANGING OF THE GUARD IN VERMILLION



Citing a need for “different leadership,” USD shocked many by firing head football coach Ed Meierkort (left) in late November after guiding the Coyotes to a 6-5 record in 2011.

In eight seasons with USD, Meierkort accumulated a 54-35 overall record, but his teams were just 15-17 over the last three seasons.

The Coyotes were also unable to win a Great West Conference title, despite have two chances to do so late in the 2011 season. USD finished its stay in the 5-team league with a 6-9 record.

Among the struggles for Meierkort were road games. Since making the move to the Division I ranks in 2008, the Coyotes were just 2-15 in FCS contests away from Vermillion. Joe Glenn (above) was hired to replace Meierkort on Dec. 5.



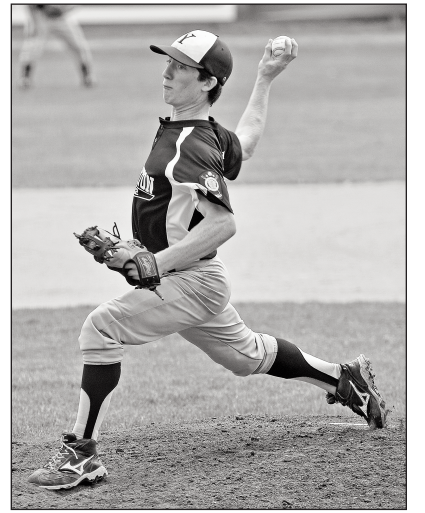
## A WEEK TO REMEMBER

Yankton First Dakota Post 12 just wouldn't let it end.

During the S.D. State Class A Legion Baseball Tournament in Yankton from July 27-August 1, the host team surprised nearly everyone by almost walking away with the state title.

Following an opening-round loss to legion powerhouse Rapid City Post 22, Yankton put together a run that included a pair of seventh-inning rallies — one a 10-run inning and another a 5-run seventh. Yankton then eliminated Brookings to advance to the tournament's final day.

Sioux Falls East halted the hometown magic with an 8-2 victory in the championship game, but what happened that weekend won't soon be forgotten.



## YANKTON TAKES CENTER STAGE IN ARCHERY WORLD



The highlight of Yankton's climb up the international archery ladder was the 2011 World Outdoor Archery Festival, which came to Yankton over a nine-day span in July.

Among the events were the National Field Archery Association (NFAA) National Field Championship, the USA Archery National Target Championship, the USA Archery National Field Championship and the Hoyt World Open.

The final event of the week were the Pan American Games trials, in which six archers solidified a place in the Pan American Games and the London 2012 Olympics test event.

Not only did the week and a half long festival provide a significant economic boom to Yankton, it brought literally the best archers in the world together — a rare occasion outside of the Olympics.

## D-1 POST-SEASON DEBUT



Following a runner-up finish in the Great West Conference regular season team race, the USD women's basketball team earned its first Division I post-season bid in mid-March.

The Coyotes were se-

lected for the second-year Women's Basketball Invitational (WBI), and defeated Idaho in a first-round matchup in Vermillion.

Though USD lost to Cal State Bakersfield in the second round, it will go down as the first playoff appearance for the program at the Division I level. The Coyotes will be eligible for the Summit League Championships beginning in the 2012-13 season.

## MILESTONES



A pair of veteran men's basketball coaches from local colleges both reached historic heights early in their seasons. USD coach Dave Boots reached the 600-win mark on Nov. 28, becoming the 64th men's coach to record 600 victories — the 13th still active.

Mount Marty coach Jim Thorson earned his 500th win with this team's season-opening victory over Ashford (Iowa). At the time, Thorson ranked 25th among active NAIA coaches in wins.

Other area coaches reached major milestones in 2011 as well.

On the basketball court, Parkston's Rob Van Laecken passed former Sioux Falls Roosevelt and Jefferson great Fred Tibbetts as the state's all-time leader in girls' basketball victories.

On the volleyball court, Parker's Jill Christensen became the state's all-time leader in victories. She passed Donna Schmitz of Gregory, who had passed Todd County great Galen Busch a week earlier.

Though the Red Raiders finished fourth at the State B Wrestling Tournament in Aberdeen, then-junior Alex Kocer vaulted himself onto an elite list.

Kocer claimed his fourth state championship, with a win at 152 pounds, making him the 12th wrestler in Class B history to win four or more titles.

Kocer has won championships at 103 pounds (2008), 119 (2009), 130 (2010) and 152 pounds.

As a senior, Kocer will be looking to become only the fifth South Dakota wrestler to win five straight state titles.

## SCORE FOUR FOR KOCER

