

USD Women Open First Season Under Amy Williams With Optimism

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VERMILLION — Following a successful 2011-2012 season that saw them go 23-8 (12-6 Summit League), the University of South Dakota Coyotes women's basketball team begins the 2012-2013 campaign a changed but still highly optimistic squad.

The Coyotes, who opened their season Nov. 9 at Cleveland State (12-19 last season), return only two starters from a year ago. Onida native Alexis Yackley (4.9 ppg, 4.6 rpg, 3.6 apg, 1.6 spg) and Elk River, Minnesota's Tempestt Wilson (7.5 ppg, 4.0 rpg), both seniors, will lead the charge from the guard position for this young USD team — nine of the 15 players on USD's roster are freshman or sophomores.

Yackley, who played her freshman year at Iowa State, started 30 of the Coyotes' 31 contests a year ago and led the Summit League in assists per game (4.8). Wilson started all 31 games last season and finished third on the team in scoring with 8.6 points per game.

Other returning upper-classmen for the Coyotes include senior forward Pam January (2.4 ppg, 2.8 rpg) and senior guard Sam Mehr (0.8 ppg, 1.0 rpg).

Junior Polly Harrington (13.5 ppg, 6.8 rpg, 10 blocked shots) transfers to USD from Johnson

Country Community College. The 5-11 Kansas City native, who played her freshman season at Louisville, averaged 11.1 points and 6.7 rebounds per game while shooting 50 percent from the field for JCCC last year.

Of all the new faces to join USD this season, perhaps the most excitement has come from the addition of head coach Amy Williams. Williams, a Spearfish native who played basketball at Nebraska, takes the reigns of the Coyotes after spending the past five years at Rogers State University. Williams helped the Oklahoma school launch its basketball team and built the Hillcats into an NAIA contender. She spent the previous six seasons before that as assistant coach/recruiting coordinator at Oklahoma State (2001-2005) and Tulsa (2005-2007).

Williams noted that the energy level surrounding the Coyotes is high following a season that saw them make the second round of the WNIT.

"From the moment I was on campus in the interview process, you feel this buzz of excitement around USD athletics," Williams commented on media day.

"That buzz has continued with our team," she added. "Since we've been able to get out on the court, it's just been a fire — there's an excitement."

The Coyotes will need big efforts from a number of underclassmen as the graduated trio of Amber Hegge, Annie Roche and Jodie Boss accounted for nearly 60 percent of the scoring and 52 percent of the rebounds from last year's team.

As if that loss was not difficult enough, the Coyotes also are without five of their 15 players for the upcoming season due to injuries.

Junior McKayla Knudson (2.7 points, 1.4 rebounds per game last year), sophomores Kelly Stewart and Taylor Moore and freshmen Taneesha Greaves and Madison-native Bailey Milne will all redshirt due to season-ending injuries.

Those losses mean that USD is down to only 10 players for the entire season — five returners



COYOTES: Polly Harrington (33)



COYOTES: Nicole Seekamp

and five newcomers. "I think we have a good mix of returners who are being great leaders for our program and newcomers who come in with that energy and that hunger to try and get better," Williams added.

Those newcomers who the Coyotes will look to for production right away include sophomore guard Nicole Seekamp (14 ppg, 4.5 rpg, 2 apg), the starting point guard for the Australia U19 women's world championship team, and former Brandon Valley standout Heidi Hoff (5.0 ppg, 2.1 rpg). Hoff, a guard, was named South Dakota Miss Basketball in 2012 after averaging 21 points and 7.8 rebounds per game as a senior for the Lynx last year.

Sophomore forward Lisa Loeffler (2.8 ppg, 2.6 rpg), a Maplewood, Minn., native, looks to build off of a freshman season in which she appeared in 19 games for the Coyotes.

"I've been impressed so far with Lisa," Williams said. "She's a skill player who provides a little bit more of a perimeter threat in our forward position."

Freshman Margaret McCloud (5.3 ppg, 6.3 rpg) is expected to get a chance to see plenty of action at the low post position this season. The former Rapid City

Stevens standout averaged 16.5 points and 14.5 rebounds for the Raiders last year as a senior and was a three-time all-state pick.

Tia Hemiller (1.6 ppg, 2.3 rpg), a freshman from Watertown, has seen time off the bench at a guard.

Despite the amount of inexperience at the collegiate level that this year's team faces, Williams sees the previous year's accolades as a reason to be optimistic.

"There is really no secret that this program has had a lot of success and we have got kids in this program that have tasted that success and they are anxious to build on it and continue to carry and raise the bar even higher," Williams said. "I've been thrilled with their attitudes and approaches."

Any success that the Coyotes taste this season will be deserved as a tough schedule awaits.

USD hosted a pair of 2012 NCAA tournament teams in the DakotaDome in November, with Creighton visiting on Nov. 20 in the home opener and Idaho State coming to Vermillion on Nov. 29. Both scored victories over the Coyotes, Creighton 53-49 and ISU 69-45, but USD has won two of its last three

to move to 3-5 on the season.

The Coyotes face NCAA-qualifier Kansas State on the road on December 9 and will of course face defending Summit League champion South Dakota State on two occasions.

The Jackrabbits host USD on Jan. 6 and travel to the DakotaDome just three weeks later to

do battle on Jan. 30.

Summit League play begins on Dec. 30 with Omaha traveling to Vermillion while the league championship will once again be held at the Sioux Falls Arena from March 9-12.

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Irene-Wakonda Boys' Basketball

Date	Opponent/Event	Location
12/10	Canistota	Irene
12/14	Viborg-Hurley	Wakonda
12/18	Beresford	Irene
12/20	Bon Homme	Irene
12/22	Menno	Menno
1/4	Gayville-Volin	Gayville
1/5	Avon	Avon
1/8	Alcester-Hudson	Alcester
1/10	Centerville	Centerville
1/12	Tri Valley Classic	Alcester
1/15	Scotland	Irene
1/17	Parker	Irene
1/22	Marion	Wakonda
1/24	Freeman Academy	Freeman
2/1	Baltic	Irene
2/5	Wynot, Neb.	Wakonda
2/8	Canton	Canton
2/11	Freeman	Freeman
2/14	Bridgewater-Emery	Bridgewater
2/25-26, 3/1	District 8B Tournament	Viborg-Hurley
3/5	Region 4B Final	TBA
3/14-16	State Tournament	Aberdeen

Girls' Basketball

Date	Opponent/Event	Location
12/4	Bridgewater-Emery	Bridgewater
12/8	Freeman	Freeman
12/14	Viborg-Hurley	Wakonda
12/17	Beresford	Wakonda
12/20	Bon Homme	Wakonda
12/22	Menno	Menno
1/4	Gayville-Volin	Gayville
1/7	Parker	Parker
1/10	Centerville	Centerville
1/15	Scotland	Irene
1/22	Marion	Wakonda
1/24	Freeman Academy	Freeman
1/26	Tri-Valley Classic	Alcester
1/28	Canistota	Irene
2/1	Baltic	Irene
2/4	Alcester-Hudson	Alcester
2/5	Wynot, Neb.	Wakonda
2/8	Canton	Canton
2/12	Avon	Irene
2/18-19, 22	District 8B Tournament	Gayville
2/28	Region 4B Final	Tea
3/7-9	State Tournament	Huron

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Andes Central Boys' Basketball

Date	Opponent/Event	Location
12/10	Platte-Geddes	Platte
12/14	Mitchell Christian	Lake Andes
12/17	Freeman Academy	Freeman
12/18	Tripp-Delmont/Armour	Lake Andes
12/27	Menno	Lake Andes
1/3	Sanborn Central/Woonsocket	Woonsocket
1/7	Gregory	Gregory
1/11	Scotland	Lake Andes
1/14	Parkston	Parkston
1/15	Colome	Colome
1/17	Avon	Avon
1/24	Bon Homme	Lake Andes
1/28	Dakota Christian	Lake Andes
1/31	Wagner	Wagner
2/4	Marty Indian	Marty
2/7	South Central	Lake Andes
2/14	Kimball/White Lake	Mitchell
2/23, 25, 3/1	District 12B Tour	Top Seed
3/5	Region 6B Final	Mitchell (Corn Palace)
3/14-16	State Tournament	Rapid City

Wrestling

Date	Opponent/Event	Location
12/8	Gregory Tournament	Gregory
1/5	SE South Dakota Conf. Tourn	Chamberlain
1/19	Winner Tournament	Winner
1/26	Wagner Invitational	Wagner
2/16	Region 3B	Wagner
2/22-23	State B Tournament	Aberdeen

Girls' Basketball

Date	Opponent/Event	Location
12/4	Gregory	Gregory
12/6	Colome	Lake Andes
12/14	Mitchell Christian	Lake Andes
12/17	Freeman Academy	Freeman
1/3	South Central	Lake Andes
1/10	Platte-Geddes	Lake Andes
1/11	Scotland	Lake Andes
1/14	Tripp-Delmont/Armour	Lake Andes
1/17	Avon	Avon
1/18	Marty Indian	Lake Andes
1/24	Bon Homme	Lake Andes
1/28	Dakota Christian	Lake Andes
1/31	Wagner	Wagner
2/5	Corsica/Stickney	Stickney
2/8	Menno	Menno
2/12	Parkston	Parkston
2/16, 18, 22	District 12B Tournament	Top Seed
3/2	Region 6B Final	Mitchell (Corn Palace)
3/7-9	State B Tournament	Huron