Press&Dakotan DAILY DOSE

Daily opinions from the P&D **Sports Staff on** local and national high school, college and pro sports.



In trying to come up with one, overriding theme for University of South Dakota athletics in 2013, I keep coming back to: "Oh so

Progress has come at a slow pace, but it's easy to see, Coyote sports across the board continued on an upward trajectory this year. A series of near-misses and close losses in many USD sports proved to be the key theme in 2013.

And so, with that in mind, I present to you my personal Top 10 USD Stories For 2013.

1. Dave Boots retires

BY JEREMY HOECK

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This piece of news took literally everybody by surprise, from administrators to assistant coaches to players to media and outsiders. The sudden nature of Boots' retirement (and the fact that it was immediate and not at the end of the season) makes this the easy choice for No. 1

2. Bethany Buell wins D-I pole vault title

The top-ranked women's pole vaulter for most of the season, Buell (now Firsick) battled through a torn shoulder ligament to win the Division I national title on her final jump in Eugene, Ore. — cementing herself in USD lore.

Year In Review: My Top USD Stories Of 2013

3. Athletic facilities receive final approval from Regents Certain changes had to be made to the basketball/volleybal arena and sports performance facility plans, but getting that final and expected — approval from the South Dakota Board of Regents was the final bureaucratic hurdle for USD.

4. Women's basketball advances to Summit League final In head coach Amy Williams' first season at the helm, the Coyote women surged to a third-place finish in the Summit League and lost by three points to rival South Dakota State in the championship game in Sioux Falls. Worth mentioning again, the crowd for that game was over 6,000. USD's Nicole Seekamp was named tournament MVP, becoming the first player from the losing team to earn the honor since 2004.

5. David Herbster named athletic director

When previous A.D. David Sayler bolted for Miami of Ohio (and no, that wasn't really all that surprising), Herbster was named interim athletic director. A few months later, he was given the job on a permanent basis — pleasing everybody over in Coyote Land. 6. Men's indoor track wins Summit League title

Toppling North Dakota State in any sport is an achievement in itself, and the Coyote men did that in the sport of indoor track at

the 2013 meet held in Vermillion. 7. Kendall Kritenbrink named Summit League volleyball

Not that it was much of a surprise, but the USD junior hitter was

recognized by the league for dominating the conference all season.

8. Football wins three straight in Missouri Valley
Coming off a 1-10 season in 2012, the Coyotes had lost their first nine Missouri Valley Football Conference games before reeling off three straight wins in October — highlighted by a double overtime triumph at Northern Iowa. USD then lost its final five games to finish the season at 4-8.

9. Volleyball reaches Summit League Tournament semifinals

Appearing ready to cruise into the tournament championship match, the Coyotes, however, saw a 2-0 edge to Denver in the semifinals evaporate in a 3-2 loss.

10. Softball qualifies for Summit League tournament Picked to finish sixth, the Coyotes bolted out to the No. 3 seed in the 4-team tournament. USD ultimately lost to Kansas City 2-0 in

the opener, finishing its season at 29-20. HONORABLE MENTION: A.D. David Sayler leaves for Miami (Ohio); USD men's basketball topples rival Jacks at the Dakota-Dome again; Men's cross country finishes second at Summit League Championships (women third); diver Greysen Hertting dominates Summit League early in career; John Thayer named radio voice of Coyote women's basketball; Basketball doubleheader

moved to Rapid City; USD holds well-attended Howling Pack gath-

SCOREBOARD

FOOTBALL

FBS BOWLS

Saturday, Dec. 21 New Mexico: Colorado State 48, shington State 45 **Las Vegas:** Southern Cal 45, Fresno

Famous Idaho Potato: San Diego Monday, Dec. 23

Beef 'O' Brady's: East Carolina 37.

Hawaii: Oregon State 38, Boise Thursday, Dec. 26

Little Caesars Pizza: Pittsburgh 30, vs. Utah State (8-5), 8:30 p.m. (ESPN) Friday, Dec. 27

Military: Marshall (9-4) vs. Maryland (7-5), 1:30 p.m. (ESPN) Texas: Minnesota (8-4) vs. Syracuse (6-6), 5 p.m. (ESPN)

Fight Hunger: BYU (8-4) vs. Washton (8-4), 8:30 p.m. (ESPN) Saturday, Dec. 28
Pinstripe: Notre Dame (8-4) vs. Rut-

gers (6-6), 11 a.m. (ESPN) Belk: Cincinnati (9-3) vs. North Carolina (6-6), 2:20 p.m. (ESPN) Russell Athletic: Miami (9-3) vs. uisville (11-1), 5:45 p.m. (ESPN)

Buffalo Wild Wings: Kansas State (7-5) vs. Michigan (7-5), 9:15 p.m. (ESPN)

(8-4) vs. Navy (7-4), 10:45 a.m. (ESPN) Music City: Mississippi (7-5) vs. orgia Tech (7-5), 2:15 p.m. (ESPN)

Alamo: Oregon (10-2) vs. Texas (8-

5:45 p.m. (ESPN) Holiday: Arizona State (10-3) vs. Texas Tech (7-5), 9:15 p.m. (ESPN)
Tuesday, Dec. 31 AdvoCare V100: Arizona (7-5) vs.

AdvoCare V100: Arizona (7-5) vs. Boston College (7-5), 11:30 a.m. (ESPN) Sun: Virginia Tech (8-4) vs. UCLA (9-3), 1 p.m. (CBS)
Liberty: Rice (9-3) vs. Mississippi State (6-6), 3 p.m. (ESPN)
Chick-fil-A: Texas A&M (8-4) vs. Duke (10-3), 7 p.m. (ESPN)
Wednesday, Jan. 1
Heart of Dallas: UNLV (7-5) vs. North Texas (8-4) 11 am (FSPNII)

North Texas (8-4), 11 a.m. (ESPNU) Gator: Nebraska (8-4) vs. Georgia

Capital One: Wisconsin (9-3) vs. uth Carolina (10-2), noon (ABC)
Outback: Iowa (8-4) vs. LSU (9-3), Rose: Stanford (11-2) vs. Michigan Ate (12-1), 4 p.m. (ESPN)

Flesta: Baylor (11-1) vs. UCF (11-1), 7:30 p.m. (ESPN)

Thursday, Jan. 2 Sugar: Alabama (11-1) vs. Okla-ma (10-2), 7:30 p.m. (ESPN) day, Jan. 3 Cotton: Missouri (11-2) vs. Oklahoma State (10-2), 6:30 p.m. (FOX)
Orange: Ohio State (12-1) vs. Clemson (10-2), 7 p.m. (ESPN)
Saturday, Jan. 4

BBVA Compass: Vanderbilt (8-4) vs. Houston (8-4), noon (ESPN)

BCS National Championship:

NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE

AMERICAN CONFERENCE

East						
	W	L	Т	Pct	PF	PA
y-New England	111	4	0	.733	410	318
Miami	8	7	0	.533	310	315
N.Y. Jets	7	8	0	.467	270	380
Buffalo	6	9	0	.400	319	354
South						
	W	L	Т	Pct	PF	PA
y-Indianapolis	10	5	0	.667	361	326
Tennessee	6	9	0	.400	346	371
Jacksonville	4	11	0	.267	237	419
Houston	2	13	0	.133	266	412
North						
	W	L	Т	Pct	PF	PA
y-Cincinnati	10	5	0	.667	396	288
Baltimore	8	7	0	.533	303	318
Pittsburgh	7	8	0	.467	359	363
Cleveland	4	11	0	.267	301	386
West						
	W	L	Т	Pct	PF	PA
y-Denver	12	3	0	.800	572	385

x-Kansas City 11 4 0 .733 406 278 San Diego 8 7 0 .533 369 324
Oakland 4 11 0 .267 308 419

NATIONAL CONFERENCE East W L T Pct PF PA 9 6 0 .600 418 360 8 7 0 .533 417 408 6 9 0 .400 274 377 Philadelphia South

3 12 0 .200 328 458 W L T Pct PF PA 11 4 0 .733 345 221 10 5 0 .667 372 287

4 11 0 .267 333 422 4 11 0 .267 271 347 North W L T Pct PF PA 8 7 0 .533 417 445 7 7 1 .500 384 400

West
W L T Pct PF PA
12 3 0 .800 390 222
11 4 0 .733 383 252
10 5 0 .667 359 301 x-Seattle 7 8 0 .467 339 337 St. Louis x-clinched playoff spot; y-clinched div.

Sunday, Dec. 29

Houston at Tennessee, noon
Detroit at Minnesota, noon Carolina at Atlanta, noon Cleveland at Pittsburgh, noon Washington at N.Y. Giants, noon Baltimore at Cincinnati, noon Jacksonville at Indianapolis, noon N.Y. Jets at Miami, noon Denver at Oakland, 3:25 p.m. Kansas City at San Diego, 3:25 p.m.
St. Louis at Seattle, 3:25 p.m.
San Francisco at Arizona, 3:25 p.m. Green Bay at Chicago, 3:25 p.m. Tampa Bay at New Orleans, 3:25 p.m. Buffalo at New England, 3:25 p.m Philadelphia at Dallas, 7:30 p.m.

TRANSACTIONS BASKETBALL

National Basketball Association NBA — Fined Golden State F Dray-mond Green \$15,000 for failing to leave CLEVELAND BROWNS — Signed DL Brian Sanford. Signed WR Conner the court in a timely manner upon his ejection during a Dec. 25 game against the Los Angeles Clippers.

CHICAGO BULLS — Assigned G

AREA CALENDAR

Friday, December 27
BASKETBALL, BOYS' Crofton Holiday Tourn.
(O'Neill St. Mary's vs. Ainsworth, 3:45 p.m.; Crofton vs. Wynot, 6:45 p.m.); Niobrara-Verdigre Holiday Tourn. at Verdigre (Osmond vs. Bloomfield, 4:30 p.m.; Allen vs. Niobrara-Verdigre, 8 p.m.); Randolph Holi-day Tourn. (Randolph); Shootout on the Elkhorn at Wisner (Ponca); Stuart Holiday Tourn. (Santee); Swiftel Classic at Brookings (Gayville-Volin); Wayne Holiday Tourn. (Hartington Cedar Catholic, Laurel-Concord-Coleridge); Irene-Wakonda at Bon

BASKETBALL, GIRLS' Crofton Holiday Tourn. (O'Neill St. Mary's vs. Ainsworth, 2 p.m.; Crofton vs. Wynot, 5 p.m.); Niobrara-Verdigre Holiday Tourn. at Verdigre (Osmond vs. Bloomfield, 2.45 p.m.; Allen vs. Niobrara-Verdigre, 6:15 p.m.); Randolph Holiday Tourn. (Randolph); Shootout on the Elkhorn at Wisner (Ponca); Stuart Holiday Tourn. (Santee); Swiftel Classic at Brookings (Gayville-Volin); Wayne Holiday Tourn. (Hartington Cedar Catholic, Laurel-Concorderidge); Irene-Wakonda at Bon Homme

WRESTLING, PREP S.F. Lincoln Inv. (Vermillion,

Marquis Teague to Iowa (NBADL). DETROIT PISTONS — Assigned G Tony Mitchell and G Peyton Siva to Fort Wayne (NBADL).

FOOTBALL

National Football League
NFL — Fined Buffalo WR Roberts Woods \$15,000 for punching Miami S Reshad Jones during a Dec. 22 game. CHICAGO BEARS — Signed WR Chris Williams from New Orleans' practice squad, Waived DT Christian Tupou

DETROIT LIONS — Placed TE Signed RW Oliver Biorkstrand to a three-Dorin Dickerson on injured reserve.
Signed TE Matt Veldman from the practice squad. Claimed WR Micheal Spurlock off waivers from Dallas, Signed WR Carlin Isles to the practice squad

INDIANAPOLIS COLTS - Signed Price from the practice squad. Signed C Thomas Austin, DE Jake McDonough and RB Tauren Poole to the practice squad.

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS — Re-

Saturday, December 28
BASKETBALL, BOYS' Buseman Classic
(Wolsey-Wessington vs. Centerville, 7 p.m.; Beresford, Viborg-Hurley); Crofton Holiday Tourn. (Consolation — 3:45 p.m.; Championship — 6:45 p.m.); East-West Classic at Chamberlain (Platte-Geddes vs. Belle Fourche, 1:30 p.m.); Niobrara-Verdigre Holiday Tourn. at Verdigre (Consolation — 4:30 p.m.; Championship - 8 p.m.); Randolph Holiday Tourn. (Randolph); Shootout on the Elkhorn at Wisner (Ponca); Stuart Holiday Tourn. (Santee); Wayne Holiday Tourn. (Hartington Cedar Catholic, Laurel-Concord-Coleridge); Scotland at Alcester-Hudson

ering in Yankton

ge); Scotland at Alcester-Hudson **BASKETBALL, GIRLS'** Crofton Holiday Tourn. (Consolation — 2 p.m.; Championship — 5 p.m.); Niobrara-Verdigre Holiday Tourn. at Verdigre (Consolation — 2:45 p.m.; Championship — 6:15 p.m.); Parkston Classic (Parkston vs. Centerville, 10 a.m.; Highmore-Harrold vs. Corsica-Stickney, 11 a.m.; Ipswich vs. Mitchell Christian, 1 p.m.; Dell Rapids vs. Aberdeen Roncalli, 2:30 p.m.; Wagner vs. Tri-Valley, 4 p.m.; Ethan vs. Groton, 5:30 p.m.; Hanson vs. Sully Buttes, 7 p.m.; Elk Point-Jefferson vs. St. Thomas More, 8:30 p.m.); Randolph Holiday Tourn. (Ran-

Snowball Classic at Winner (Platte-Geddes); Stuar Holiday Tourn. (Santee); Wayne Holiday Tourn. (Hart ington Cedar Catholic, Laurel-Concord-Coleridge) GYMNASTICS, GIRLS' Winter Wonderland Inv

dolph): Shootout on the Elkhorn at Wisner (Ponca

ermillion (Vermillion, Wagner, 11:30 a.m.) **HOCKEY, BOYS' JV** Yankton at Aberdeen (DH,

8 p.m.) **HOCKEY, PEE WEE** Yankton B at Oahe (DH, 11 WRESTLING, PREP Pierce Inv. (Hartington

Cedar Catholic, Laurel-Concord-Coleridge); S.F. Lin-coln Inv. (Vermillion, Wagner, 10 a.m.) Sunday, December 29 BASKETBALL, MEN'S USD at Youngstown

te (1 p.m., KVHT-FM)

HOCKEY, BOYS' JV Yankton at Aberdeen (11:30

HOCKEY, GIRLS' JV Yankton at Watertown (2)

HOCKEY, PEE WEE Yankton A at Brookings

tario (ECHL). Released G Aaron Dell

ECHL
UTAH GRIZZLIES — Announced G

Aaron Dell was returned to the team from

CÓLLEGE

coach. MICHIGAN STATE — Suspended

senior LB Max Bullough for violating team

FLORIDA — Named Kurt Roper of-nsive coordinator and quarterbacks

Manchester (AHL)

rules, making him ineligible to play in the Rose Bowl. agreement.

MANCHESTER MONARCHS — Recalled G Mathias Niederberger from Onleased CB Marquice Cole.
HOCKEY Vernon to the practice squad. Released RB Jamaine Cook from the practice

Allen, Others Likely Face Last Game With Vikings

BY DAVE CAMPBELL

AP Pro Football Writer

EDEN PRAIRIE, Minn. (AP) — Adrian Peterson's status for the last game of the season is uncertain.

"Stay tuned," the Min-

nesota running back said. Even if he doesn't play on Sunday against Detroit, Peterson will have plenty more games in purple, his health allowing. Peterson has a lot of prominent teammates who aren't, however, assured of such a future. Defensive end

Jared Allen leads the list. 'I'd be lying if I said I don't think about it, but it's not what's on my mind right now," Allen said on Thursday. "I've got to prepare for this game. I'm trying to go out the way I want in this Metrodome and have this last game be

something special."
Neither the Vikings nor the Lions can qualify for the playoffs, of course, so pride, nostalgia and camaraderie are the priorities for Sunday. Allen, who has 83 1/2 sacks since he arrived in Minnesota in 2008, tied for the most in the NFL over that span, has an expiring contract. He can still reach a double-digit total for the seventh straight year with half a sack or more against the Lions, but at age 31 he's not likely to fit in the team's plans for next season.



ELIZABETH FLORES/MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE/MCT

Minnesota Vikings defensive end Jared Allen (69) celebrates with fans in the fourth quarter of an NFL game against the Philadelphia Eagles at Mall of America Field in Minneapolis on Dec. 15, 2013. Allen is one of several Vikings who will be free agents at the end of the season.

"I'm not naove to the point that I don't understand the business side of this or understand the trends that have happened in the past," Allen said, adding: "Some things are out of your control, and this one is out of your control. We're moving forward. And when the smoke settles, everybody will be where they're supposed to be, whether it's here or

whether it's not. That will be decided at that time, but right now I'm having fun getting a chance to put this uniform on one more time."

The sentiment for Allen will be especially high considering the probability he'll be playing next to defensive tackle Kevin Williams, who has become a close friend, for the final time. Williams is

the team, and the 33-year-old will also be a free agent in the spring.

They've been one of the top end-tackle tandems in the league. "I don't know that there's

going to be many better. There might be some that are the same," Lions coach Jim Schwartz said.

Allen and Williams have the longest-tenured player on talked often this week about

Vikings To Honor Birk Before Final Metrodome Game

COLUMBUS BLUE JACKETS -

year, entry-level contract.
WINNIPEG JETS — Recalled D Julian Melchiori from St. John's (AHL).
Placed D Grant Clitsome on the injured

American Hockey League
AHL — Suspended Lake Erie D

Mikael Tam one game for a charging inci-

dent in a Dec. 20 game at Rochester. HARTFORD WOLF PACK — Signed

D Sam Klassen to a professional tryout

reserve list, retroactive to Dec. 17.

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The Minnesota Vikings plan to honor former center Matt Birk before their final game at the Metrodome

Birk will serve as an honorary captain for the Vikings game against the Detroit Lions.

The Vikings originally drafted Birk in the sixth round of the 1998 NFL Draft. He spent 11 seasons with the Vikings and four seasons with the Baltimore Ravens. Birk earned Pro Bowl

honors six times during his career. He was the 2011 NFL Walter Payton Man of the Year and capped his NFL career as a member of the Ravens team that won the Super Bowl last February.

Birk retired following the 2012 season.

the way they'd like to finish the season, the stadium and, likely, their careers together.

"I don't want anybody crying around here on Friday and Saturday," Allen said. "But we'll enjoy it when the time is right. After the game, that's the time to get senti-

mental.' The end of the season always brings turnover in the NFL, but after a bad year there's often more. Other veterans who could be with the Vikings for the last time on Sunday: left guard Charlie Johnson, running back Toby Gerhart, tight end John Carlson and defensive tackle Fred

Peterson is aiming to play regardless of the relevance of this game. He was held out two weeks ago with a sprained right foot and said he "felt uncomfortable" playing on it last week. Peterson has also been hampered by a groin injury. He took part in practice on Thursday, which coach Leslie Frazier said was encouraging to him. But Peterson sounded more pessimistic than usual about his

"I'm feeling OK. I've felt better. My body has been able to rest a little bit. I'm trying to push to Sunday," he

Packers' Rodgers Back, To Start Bears Game

BY GENARO C. ARMAS AP Sports Writer

GREEN BAY, Wis. (AP) — Aaron Rodgers has been cleared to return from a left collarbone injury, just in time to start Sunday for the Packers against the Chicago Bears in a game to decide the NFC North title.

With no advance warning and little

fanfare, the franchise quarterback received the long-awaited good news at the same time as the rest of his teammates Thursday. "This is a fun day for me, but I think

the focus needs to be on this game and the opportunity we have to win the division," Rodgers said. Soon enough. But the spotlight for

now is squarely on the return of one of

the NFL's most irreplaceable players. Green Bay (7-7-1) is 2-5-1 since Rodgers went down during the first series of a 27-20 loss Nov. 4 to Chicago. The Packers have managed to hang on, with a shot to win a third straight division title with a victory Sunday at Sol-

"I'll start with the announcement that we're preparing for the Chicago Bears with Aaron Rodgers as our starting quarterback," coach Mike McCarthy told reporters Thursday after practice.

Win and Green Bay returns to Lambeau Field the following weekend to host a wild-card team in the first round of the playoffs.

We're in it. You know we have a chance against our rivals, and what a better way than to go down there and get some redemption and host a home playoff game," Rodgers said.

The last two months have been filled with angst for Packers fans. Discussions about whether Rodgers should risk future injury or return to bolster Green Bay's playoff chances have filled sports talk radio shows and holiday office par-

Now imagine what it was like for the Packers' brass and team doctor. The organization made a big investment in Rodgers this past offseason, signing him to a five-year contract extension through the 2019 season worth as much as \$110 million.

"Every football player that plays in this game Sunday will have risk. I think we all understand that," McCarthy said. "So we've done our due diligence. We've gone through all the evaluations and we feel it is time. Aaron is ready to play.'

Carthy gave the official word at a team meeting. No rousing speeches or rounds of applause. The scene? We were sitting in the team room and he told us," Rodgers

Finally at 8:05 a.m. Thursday, Mc-

said matter-of-factly. "That was the Rodgers is returning just when passrushing linebacker Clay Matthews is leaving the lineup again with a right thumb injury. Green Bay also has gone the majority of the season without tight end Jermichael Finley (neck). Projected starting left tackle Bryan Bulaga went down in training camp. Defensive end

Johnny Jolly (shoulder/neck) was the

latest Packer to get knocked out for the

year last week. Still, the Packers managed to start 5-2 despite the injuries with Rodgers leading the offense.

Things changed drastically after the 2011 NFL MVP got hurt on a sack while scrambling out of the pocket in the Week 9 loss to Chicago at Lambeau Field. The Packers went on a five-game winless skid, shuffling through three more starting quarterbacks.

Green Bay then won two straight with backup Matt Flynn before falling 38-31 last week to the Pittsburgh Steelers. Losses by Chicago and the Detroit Lions set up the winner-take-all finale Sunday with the Bears for the division.

Rodgers' impending return wasn't the only good injury news Thursday in Titletown.

Rookie running back Eddie Lacy was held out of practice with a lingering ankle injury, though McCarthy expects his 1,100-yard rusher to play Sunday. Playmaking receiver Randall Cobb, out since Week 6 with a leg injury, is moving well in practice and appears to be get-

ting closer to returning. While he won't make the final call, Cobb said "This week in practice I'm

going out and preparing to play." And now with Rodgers back, positive vibes are reverberating through the locker room.

Rodgers has gained added perspective from having to watch from the sideline with a headset. He's been there to help Flynn. He understands that every move he makes in Chicago will be dissected by armchair quarterbacks.

"It's easy to talk about it with you guys and understand the risks," he said. But when you're out on the field, it's about performing and playing and not worrying about it.

LeBron James Wins AP Male Athlete Of The Year

MIAMI (AP) — The only thing that keeps LeBron James up worrying at night is basketball, which simultaneously makes perfect sense and no

On one hand, he's the game's best player. On the other, he's rarely impressed with himself.

Even after a year like 2013

- when a spectacular wed-

ding, a second NBA championship and a fourth MVP award were among the many highlights enjoyed by the Miami Heat star — he still is, as he puts it, striving for greatness. Or, technically, more greatness, since his enormous list of accomplishments just keeps growing.

James was announced Thursday as The Associated Press' 2013 Male Athlete of the Year, becoming the third basketball player to capture the award that has been annually awarded since 1931.

James received 31 of 96 votes cast in a poll of news organizations, beating Peyton Manning (20) and Jimmie Johnson (7). I'm chasing something

and it's bigger than me as a basketball player," James told the AP. "I believe my calling is much higher than being a basketball player. I can inspire people. Youth is huge to me. If I can get kids to look at me as

a role model, as a leader, a superhero ... those things mean so much, and that's what I think I was built for. I was put here for this lovely game of basketball, but I don't think this is the biggest role that I'm

going to have. Past winners include Joe Louis, Jesse Owens, Muhammad Ali, Carl Lewis, Joe Montana, Tiger Woods and Michael Phelps. Serena Williams was the AP Female Athlete of the Year, announced Wednesday.

James joins Michael Jordan and Larry Bird as NBA players to win the award.

"I don't think I've changed much this year," James said. 'I've just improved and continued to improve on being more than just as a basketball player. I've matured as a leader, as a father, as a husband, as a friend.

So far in 2013, with a maximum of three games left to play, James has appeared in 98. The Heat have won 78 of them.

None of those was bigger than the four Miami got in the NBA Finals against San Antonio. In Game 7, James was at his best, scoring 37 points, including the jump shot with 27.9 seconds left that essentially was the clincher.