

Daily Dose: Final Thoughts On Our Season Preview

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You may notice that this year's Winter Sports Preview doesn't look like some of our recent previews. In fact, there are a few things that are a lot different than years past.

One thing that was similar to this fall's preview but different from past sections is the lack of college previews. We decided this summer that these three sections were best served by bringing you more high school content — and hopefully some interesting stories that we weren't able to bring you in the past — instead of rehashing college stories that had, for the most part, run weeks in advance of the section release. We are still doing plenty of college sports coverage, just not in this section.

One thing that we hadn't done since I have been here was a trio of "cover" stories. We did three different stories on our "Family Tradition" theme, and could have done about 20 more. (If you don't believe me, see the list on Page 4.) We chose families that were used to dealing with us, which allowed them to open up for those stories.

I had particular fun with the story on the Fitzsimmons family, having covered the younger Fitzsimmons' — and Ramsey Kavan, who is now a Fitzsimmons — as they competed for Yankton High School. It



The photo of photos that helped inspire this year's Winter Sports Preview cover. It was a lot of work, but I like the result, and I hope you do, too.

gave me a chance to catch up with them, as well as meet Sean and Ramsey's adventurous little girl, Rory.

It was also fun because it was the first time I got to sit down with

former Yankton coach and current University of South Dakota coach Dan Fitzsimmons for an extended conversation in a long time. When Dan was at Yankton, he would often hand-deliver results so that he had

an excuse to come down and talk sports in the office. (Something we probably could not do at night these days with our earlier press deadlines.)

The cover design actually came from an idea presented to me by our composing director, Kathy Larson. My original idea was a horizontal cover with the three "family" portraits sitting on a fireplace mantel. When I could not find a suitable mantel for my concept, I asked Kathy for help. She didn't have any better luck than I did, but asked about my concept. I told her, and she came back with the "photo wall."

We wanted to make it look like the average family's photo wall: lots of pictures in mismatched frames and not lined up perfectly. We also wanted to give the feel that the "wall" was bigger than our page, which is why some of the pictures hang off the edges.

Of course, finding frames was almost as difficult as finding a mantel. Luckily I found a few suitable frames, then adjusted them in Photoshop to make look like a few more different frames. (Of the 16 "frames" on the front, there are probably six or seven actual different designs.)

One of the frames not used on the front was the one I used for our staff's "family" picture. It didn't really work with the cover, since it had the colors and pencils on it, but it was a fun little thing that I couldn't resist using. Adrienne Kusek, our youngest staffer, was sick the day we planned to take the photo, which is why she is pictured below the staff shot on Page 2.

We used the same photos and frames for our cover stories, but wanted to "carry the theme" all the way through the preview. Knowing

that trying to make my limited frame supply work for another 40 or so photos (I haven't counted, but I know there are a lot.) was not practical, so I looked for a solution.

What I found was a frame style within our design program. (Actually, I found two — one for the area schedules and one for the photos.) This allowed me to size photos properly without a distorted frame.

The nameplate on the photos was an idea of one of my former staffers, current news reporter Shauna Marlette. She not only came up with the idea, but designed the nameplate basically from scratch on Saturday, in between watching the South Dakota State basketball and football teams in action.

Now, about the rest of the content:

Last winter was a lot of fun from a coverage standpoint. I covered the state gymnastics meet for the first time. I was there when Parkston won another wrestling title, when the USD women won their first-ever Summit League basketball title, when the Gayville-Volin girls stepped on a state tournament floor for the first time and when the Yankton Bucks returned to the state basketball tournament.

Jeremy also had fun: besides covering USD in the Summit and in its NCAA Tournament game, he was there for state championships for Crofton and Wynot again, among other things.

What will this winter bring? Who knows? But we expect it to be fun again. Enjoy the ride.

You can follow James D. Cimburek on Twitter at twitter.com/JCimburek. Discuss this story at www.yankton.net

Researchers Make Progress In Search For Concussion Blood Test

BY MARIE MCCULLOUGH
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PHILADELPHIA (TNS) — For decades, researchers have been seeking a blood test that could diagnose a concussion and tell whether it is severe enough to cause lasting brain damage.

In a big step toward that goal, University of Pennsylvania scientists have found that a blood protein called SNTF surged and stayed elevated in professional hockey players with persistent concussion symptoms, but not in players who recovered within a few days.

"These results show that SNTF has promise as a blood biomarker for sports-related concussion," said Robert Siman, a research professor of neurosurgery at Penn and lead author of the study in last month's *Journal of Neurotrauma*.

Every year, a million people in the U.S. — many of them young athletes — are hit on the head, causing the mild brain trauma known as concussion. Although most recover within hours or days, a minority suffer lasting symptoms of brain injury such as headaches, confusion, depression, and irritability.

Current diagnostic tests for concussion are imprecise and indirect; even a CT scan may show nothing unusual. Test results often leave coaches and athletes unsure about whether returning to play is safe — or liable to

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JEFFREY J. BAZARIAN, EMERGENCY MEDICINE PHYSICIAN, AND CONCUSSION EXPERT, UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER

lead to disabling, potentially fatal, reinjury.

Siman and his Penn team discovered SNTF and have spent 20 years studying it, hoping to find a blood protein that correlates with brain injury the way troponin signals cardiac damage. Troponin tests are ordered to assess whether chest pain is due to a heart attack. "We were looking for a brain counterpart," Siman said.

SNTF is normally undetectable in brain nerve cells called axons. But after injury, the protein accumulates in axons and spills into the blood — even when a CT scan seems normal.

In a past study of concussion treated in the emergency room, Siman's team found that patients who had brain abnormalities on MRI scans or thinking problems that persisted at least three months had elevated SNTF blood levels.

The new study, done with Swedish researchers, used

blood drawn before and during the hockey season from 73 Swedish professional hockey players, including 28 who had concussions.

Compared to preseason baseline levels, SNTF rose an hour after concussion. Levels returned to baseline in eight players whose concussion symptoms resolved in a few days, but stayed elevated for up to six days in the 20 players whose persistent symptoms kept them off the ice for six days or more.

By measuring SNTF after a training session, the study also found that exertion did not affect the level.

Several other potential concussion markers have been evaluated but have drawbacks, said Jeffrey J. Bazarian, an emergency medicine physician and concussion expert at the University of Rochester. For example, he discovered that a nervous system protein that surges after a concussion also rises after a marathon or bone

fracture. "Contact sports are being played differently now. Athletes get hit a lot more," Bazarian said. "A protein like this (SNTF) is so desperately needed. We need a way to pull athletes out of a game, prick their finger, and not even ask them their symptoms. We need to take the guesswork out of diagnosing concussion."

Though SNTF needs to be validated in a larger, longer study, Siman said he was pursuing development of a commercial test. A reliable test could open the door to developing something else that is

desperately needed — a way to heal concussion. "An early prognostic marker like we hope SNTF

will prove to be is absolutely vital to the search for drug treatments and rehabilitative strategies," Siman said.

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S.D. Girls

From Page 19

Kirsten Paetow (So., 5-6, G, 2.5 ppg, 1.7 rpg), Annie Wirth (Jr., 5-6, G), Emily Bjerkaas (So., 5-7, G), Jaclynn Knutson (Jr., 5-7, F)

NEWCOMERS: Steffanie Murphy (Fr., 5-10), Sydney Novak (Fr., 5-6), Allison Stoltenberg (Fr., 5-6), Victoria Hansen (8th, 5-8), Holly Richards (8th, 5-8), Shania Knutson (8th, 5-8), Skyler Kludt (8th, 5-6), Breanna Johnson (8th, 5-6), Hannah Simonsen (8th, 5-6), Kaylee Kropuenske (8th, 5-6), Hallie Sawyer (8th, 5-7), Delane Wobig (8th, 5-7)

Wagner

COACH: Mike Koupal
VITALS: Class A, Region 5, Little Missouri Valley Conference, Southeast South Dakota Conference

LAST YEAR: The Red Raiders were 12-10, losing in the second round of regions.

TOP PROSPECTS: Ali Kuca (Jr., 5-10, 16 ppg, 7 rpg, 3 spg, All-Conference, 3rd team All-State), Emily Brunson (Jr., 6-0, 12 ppg, 7 rpg, All-Conference)

NEWCOMERS: Hailey Hilzenderger (Sr., 5-7), Bethany Sully (So., 5-5), Promise Mace (Jr., 5-7), Brooke Roth (Jr., 5-8), Kristan Soukup (So., 5-6)

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