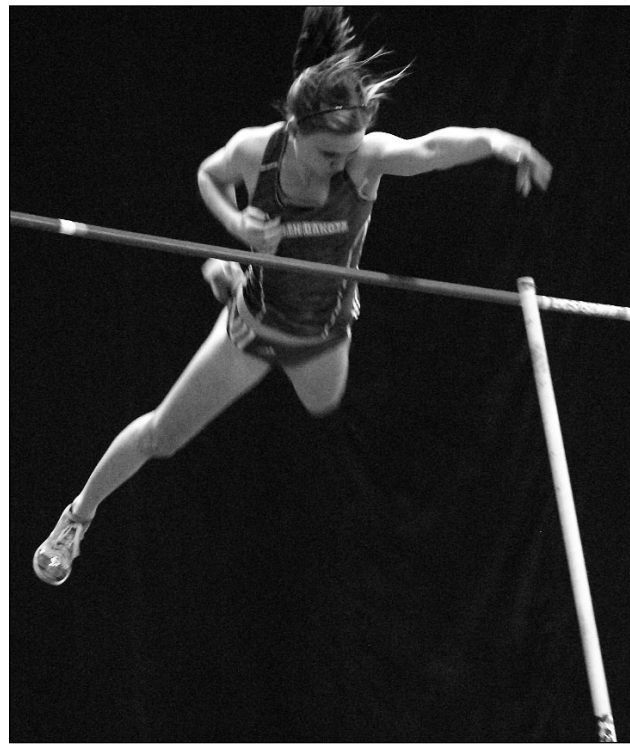


S.D. Sportswriters Association | 2014 Year-End Awards

Grove Continues To Soar For USD



P&D FILE PHOTO
Emily Grove of the University of South Dakota competes in the women's pole vault during the 2014 Dakota Realty Alumni Meet at the DakotaDome in Vermillion. Grove, who finished second in the pole vault and the NCAA Indoor Track and Field Championships, has been named the College Women's Athlete of the Year by the South Dakota Sportswriters Association.

BY JEREMY HOECK
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VERMILLION — A year after watching teammate Bethany Firsick win a national outdoor pole vault, Emily Grove nearly did the same thing in the indoor season.

After a pair of seventh-place finishes in two previous national meets, Grove took second at the NCAA Division I Indoor Championships in March to capture her third All-American honor.

For that performance and two other significant distinctions, the junior from Pontiac, Illinois, has been named the College Women's Athlete of the Year by the South Dakota Sportswriters Association.

More than anything, the thing that stands out to Grove about the 2014 seasons is her technique. As in, she was clicking.

"When I was going down the runway, I felt really good," she said. "I could just tell my run was pretty snappy.

"And I was having fun too, and that always helps."

After winning Grove set a personal best with a jump of 14 feet, 9.5 inches during the indoor season and later got seventh at the national meet with a 14-7.25.

She went on to finish sixth in the USA Track & Field (USATF) Indoor Championships and was later named Women's Indoor Scholar Athlete of the Year.

"I felt like I was ready to PR just because of how good I felt," Grove said. "I didn't have anything to complain about.

"(Vault coach) Derek (Miles) was working on a lot of technical things in the run, and I felt like I was on the right track."

Grove, though, is once again battling an injury.

Last spring, a stress fracture in her shin led to her redshirting the outdoor season. And now, she is faced with recovering from a stress fracture in her back.

Grove has the holiday break to heal up, but as to when she could start vaulting

again, that's unclear — the short-term focus, instead, is on getting back to spring 2014 form.

"Now I just want to get healthy and rediscover that rhythm," she said. "Just want to get back."

The motivation from Miles, a former Olympian vaulter, is helpful for Grove, she said.

"Derek always tells me, 'I'd rather have you untrained and healthy than trained and broken,'" Grove said.

"I guess that makes sense," she added with a smile.

A source of motivation for Grove is how the USD women fared in the two Summit League meets this year. The Coyotes were second in the indoor meet and third in the outdoor — North Dakota State won both.

"We got third at conference. We're not going to let that happen again," Grove said. "(Head coach) Lucky

GROVE | PAGE 7A

Toughness, Determination Put Kokesh On Top

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK
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As Nebraska's Robert Kokesh battled on the wrestling mat to get to the placing rounds and repeat as an All-American, he felt a pop in his knee. He wrestled through it, and threw the matches to follow to finish fourth in the nation at 174 pounds.

That "pop," as you can imagine, was his ACL. What followed, Kokesh said, was tougher than wrestling with a torn ACL.

"I honestly believe that was one of the hardest things I've ever had to overcome throughout my wrestling career," said the Wagner native, this year's recipient of the South Dakota Sportswriters Association Independent Male Athlete of the Year. "It was even harder than wrestling on a torn ACL."

Kokesh had lost to conference rival and fellow South Dakotan Logan Storley, a Webster native, in the third round of the 2014 NCAA Wrestling Tournament. Later that day, he felt the pop during the third period of his match against Illinois' Tony Dallago.

"I didn't really think much of it at that point, didn't feel any pain," he said. "After the match started cooling down and my knee wasn't feeling right."

After his 8-2 win over Dallago, Kokesh wrestled one more time that day, a 2-1 overtime victory over Tyler Wilps of Pittsburgh. The next day, Kokesh beat Mike Evans of Iowa 10-4 before losing to Storley 3-1. Kokesh had beaten Storley to win the Big Ten Championship two weeks earlier for his first collegiate league title.

"It was a tough process," he said. "For me it was a lot of mental, and pushing through that."

The outcome was the reverse of their NCAA Tournament meeting in 2013, when Kokesh scored a 3-1 overtime win for third at 174 pounds.

"Robert had a great tournament. He left eight seconds out there that he regrets, that he can learn from," said Nebraska head wrestling coach Mark Manning, a Vermillion native. "He had a great tournament considering he tore his ACL in the next round and wrestled three and a half matches later."

"It was a pretty good testament to the kind of character, grit and toughness that Robert brings to the wrestling mat."

After picking up his NCAA hardware, the hard work really began as he tried to rebuild the knee that had given out on him. Kokesh gave Nebraska assistant trainer Tyler Weeda for helping him remain focused through the process.

"There would be times when 'I don't want to do this anymore,' and 'This sucks,' but (Weeda) kept the goal at hand," Kokesh said. "He kept asking me, 'What do you want to do? Do you want to win a national title next year?' And I would say 'Yeah, I want to win a national title next year.' Then he would say, 'Well, you've got to start here. You've got to start now.'"

As hard as doing the work to build his knee back up was having to sit and watch while

KOKESH | PAGE 7A

USD Coaches Sweep Honors

Williams Named Top Women's Team Coach

BY JEREMY HOECK
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VERMILLION — The way Amy Williams tells it, she learned more about her players after returning from the NCAA Tournament than she did on their journey to the biggest stage.

The women's basketball coach at the University of South Dakota was in the DakotaDome with her 9-year-old daughter over the summer, simply wanting to run laps around the track.

Williams heard basketballs bouncing in the West gym. She walked over and saw her players going through competitive shooting drills against each other. It wasn't an official or even organized practice, it was all something set up individually by the players.

"That was a heart-warming for a head coach to watch that," Williams said.

It also proved to Williams, now in her third season at USD, that her program wasn't satisfied with winning the Summit League tournament title — and reaching the NCAA Tournament — just once.

"They got a little taste of what it's like to be successful, and they want more of it," said Williams, whose Coyotes are 8-2 this season.

For guiding USD to its first Division I NCAA Tournament appearance, Williams has been named the College Women's Coach of the Year by the South Dakota Sportswriters Association.

It's been a steady climb for the Spearfish native.

Williams was hired at USD in June 2012, and in her first season (2012-13), the Coyotes reached the Summit League tournament title game — losing by three to South Dakota State. A season later, the Coyotes won the championship.

The key to the program's rise has been the dedication of her players, Williams said.

WILLIAMS | PAGE 7A



P&D FILE PHOTO
University of South Dakota women's basketball coach Amy Williams, left, shows her excitement as she joins her team on the stand to accept their Summit League post-season tournament trophy. Williams has been named the College Women's Coach of the Year by the South Dakota Sportswriters Association.

Gottsleben Earns Men's Coaching Award

FROM P&D STAFF REPORTS

Dave Gottsleben had won conference titles at the Division I level, but the veteran men's track coach at the University of South Dakota did even better in 2014.

His squads swept the Summit League track and field crowns.

Gottsleben, who enters his 31st season with the Coyotes in 2015, guided USD to its second consecutive Summit League indoor championship and later to the program's first outdoor conference title since 2006.

At the league's indoor championship in March, the Coyote men repeated as conference champions.

Gottsleben was named Coach of the Year, while Jeff Mettler was named Men's Track Championship MVP after winning two individual events.

Two months later, the Coyote men tied North Dakota State for the Summit League outdoor title, their first-ever at the Division I level. USD previously won a North Central Conference outdoor title in 2006, back in the D-II days.

USD rallied from a 32-point deficit with five events remaining in the meet, but a second-place finish in the final event ensured the Coyotes would tie for the crown.

Mettler was named the Men's Track Championship MVP, while Kyle McK-

elvey (Beresford) was named Men's Field Championship MVP and Dustin Valind earned Men's Newcomer honors.

And by the looks of what the Coyotes return for the 2015 season, they could be in contention again for a league title.

Picked second in the pre-season Summit League indoor poll, USD returns a league-high four individual champions — Cody Snyder (shot put), Kevin Sarekhkhani (pole vault), Teivaskie Lewin (60-meter hurdles) and Mach Dojiok (800-meter run). Three members of the champion 1600-meter relay quarter are also back for the Coyotes.

P&D FILE PHOTO

A Look At The Other South Dakota Sportswriters Association Honorees

Three individuals who transitioned into a new phase of life — two all-time coaching greats who retired and a great athlete who retired and became a coach — highlight the honorees as the South Dakota Sportswriters Association presents its 2014 Year-End Awards.

A top athlete, coach and team were selected in boys' and girls' prep and men's and women's collegiate categories. Honorees also include top male and female "independent" athletes, an "independent" team and the state's sports celebrity of the year. Honorees are chosen by members of the SDSWA.

Here is a look at each winner:

Celebrity

After announcing her retirement at the end of the season as a professional basketball player after 16 years in the WNBA and other professional leagues around the globe, Rapid City's Becky Hammon made sports history.

The Rapid City Stevens product became the first full-time, paid female assistant coach in any

American men's professional sports league when she was hired by the NBA champion San Antonio Spurs.

"I very much look forward to the addition of Becky Hammon to our staff," Spurs head coach Gregg Popovich said in a statement. "Having observed her working with our team this past season, I'm confident her basketball IQ, work ethic and interpersonal skills will be a great benefit to the Spurs."

It's another in a long line of accomplishments for Hammon, who noted that she has been overlooked as a basketball player for much of her career — starting in high school, where she was South Dakota's Miss Basketball in 1994; Colorado State University, where she was a first-team AP All-American in 1999; as an undrafted player for the WNBA's New York Liberty and now with the San Antonio Silver Stars, becoming a six-time WNBA All-Star; and playing in the 2008 and 2012 Olympics on the Russian national team, winning a bronze medal in 2008.

Independent Female Athlete

The small-town kid from Clark definitely hit the big time in 2014, enjoying success as a 23-year-old rookie on the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) Tour.

Playing in only 19 Tour events, Kaufman still finished 58th on the money list with earnings of \$275,273 and collected her LPGA Tour card for

2015. Among the highlights included three top 10 finishes — tying for fourth in the North Texas Shootout in May, tying for fifth in the Canadian Women's Open in Augusta and tying for ninth in the Yokohama Tire Classic in September.

She also played in her first LPGA Tour major — the Women's British Open — and closed out her season by playing in four LPGA events in Asia (Malaysia, South Korea, Taiwan and Japan).

"There's always moments when you are playing bad where you think: 'Oh my gosh, what am I doing out here?'" said Kaufman. "Then there's so many other moments where you think: 'Wow! This is what it's all about and why all the time and hard work pays off.'"

"Those moments came more than the bad ones and that's what keeps you going. I just keep trying to balance those out. I had a lot of moments this year that made me realize why I am so lucky to get to do this job."

Success in golf isn't new to Kaufman, who also earned the same Independent Female honor in 2012 after a strong senior season at Texas Tech University. She won four state Class B individual titles and played on six state Class B championship teams in high school and also has won three SDGA Women's Amateur championships.

Independent Team

The Aberdeen Swim Club won its first South

Dakota Long Course State Championship since 1982 this past July in Mitchell.

To win the state title, Aberdeen used 55 swimmers from ages 7-18 who won 43 individual state titles and eight relay titles and set 10 state meet records and five overall meet records. The Aberdeen team had 22 members win at least one state title.

"Winning a championship is a goal and dream of every coach and it was for our team and me," Aberdeen Swim Club coach Elyce Kastigar said. "Each season we discuss individual and team goals and winning a state championship is always on the list. Many years have gone into developing and growing this team."

Aberdeen scored 3,516 points, while the Sioux Falls Snowfox were second with 3,194. Pierre was third with 1,693.

"A championship like this involves so many people: the athletes, all the coaching staff and the parents for being committed to getting their children involved and committed, for help in team operations, meet operations and the building of our program," Kastigar said. "It takes everyone."

Prep Boys' Athlete

Heading into his final football season with the Howard Tigers, Luke Loudenburg was missing one thing — a state championship.

The 5-foot-5, 150-pound senior fullback not only got his state title, but a collection of records to

go along with it.

Loudenburg finished his career with 6,806 rushing yards and 108 touchdowns. His rushing mark topped Hanson's Jim Williams' record of 6,010 yards. Loudenburg's 108 touchdowns surpassed Garretson's Joe Evenson's record of 92 career rushing touchdowns.

In Loudenburg's senior season, he had 200 carries for 2,685 yards, 53 rushing touchdowns, one receiving touchdown and 3,299 all-purpose yards, en route to helped the Tigers to a 12-0 record and the Class 9A state title. He was also named Joe Robbie Most Valuable Player and Outstanding Back in the 2014 Class 9A state championship.

"This year couldn't have been a better year for me," Loudenburg said. "There's no way I would go back and try to redo anything I did in the last four years. I'm completely satisfied with the career I had at Howard, and there are definitely no regrets."

In the spring when Loudenburg was a junior, he earned his third straight state wrestling title. He beat Philip Area's Rance Johnson 9-3 in the 138-pound final.

Prep Boys' Coach

Larry Luijters retired from 43 years of coaching basketball so he could watch some more basket-

AWARDS | PAGE 7A