

Press&Dakotan DAILY DOSE

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



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Narrowing Sports Stories To Top 10 Proved To Be Challenging

As sports editor James Cimburek and I sat down a couple weeks ago to come up with our annual list of top 10 sports stories from the past year, we agreed on most of the 'big' stories. But as you can imagine, narrowing a list down to 10 is certainly challenging. In the case of the Press & Dakotan, we cover nearly 40 high schools across two states, an NAIA college (Mount Marty) and an NCAA Division I school (University of South Dakota). And so naturally, you've got a wide array of issues to deal with. There were, in our eyes, three 'major' stories from the past year that needed to find a spot in the list.
• USD women's basketball winning the Summit League tournament and reaching the NCAA Tournament.
• Yankton High School football team winning a state Class 11AA title, capping a perfect season, and
• A dominant year for Crofton girls' athletics. The Warriors won state titles in basketball, track and cross country, and finished second at state in volleyball.

One of the first things that came to mind for me — as it usually does in a list like this — was national prominence. Which of those issues had an impact beyond Yankton and the surrounding area? The answer was clear, the USD women.
So once we slotted the Coyote basketball story at No. 1, the rest of the list came together fairly easy. Stories like Yankton archery, Trey Krier taking over Yankton girls' basketball, Craig Smith hired at USD, pole vaulter Emily Grove and USD breaking ground on building projects soon found their space.
Of course, with any list like this, you have to make tough choices, and have to ultimately leap-frog certain items over others.
In the case of our top 10 list, stories such as Parkston football (winning first-ever state title), Parkston wrestling (repeating as state champion), USD diver Greyson Hertling's dominance of Summit League diving scene and the Yankton boys' basketball team reaching the state tournament for the first time since 2008 fell just short of our list.
What do you think of our list? We'd like to hear from you. Both James and I are active on Twitter, with James at @JCimburek and myself at @jhoeck. Otherwise you can email the sports department at sports@yankton.net. Hope you enjoyed the list.

Crofton Booster Club Basketball Tourney Jan. 24-25

CROFTON, Neb. — The Crofton Booster Club will host a youth basketball tournament on Jan. 24-25 in Crofton, Nebraska. The tournament is open to boys' and girls' teams in grades 4-8. Grades 7-8 will be in one division.
There is a discount for teams registered prior to Jan. 3, 2015. For more information, contact Theresa Guenther at 402-367-3748 or 605-660-7944.

Skyforce Guard Drew Sets D-League Assists Record

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — Sioux Falls Skyforce guard Larry Drew II dished out 23 assists against the Rio Grande Valley Vipers on Christmas night, breaking the NBA Development League record.
The previous record of 22 was set by Darryl McDonald of the Skyforce in 1992 and tied in 2007 by Idaho's Randy Livingston.
Drew also scored 16 points as the Skyforce downed the Vipers 135-129.

UND's Schmaltz Playing For USA In World Juniors

GRAND FORKS, N.D. (AP) — University of North Dakota freshman forward Nick Schmaltz has made the final roster of the U.S. National Junior Team that is competing at the 2015 International Ice Hockey Federation World Junior Championships in Canada.
Schmaltz is the 37th UND player to participate in the World Junior Championships through the years. This year's tournament in Toronto and Montreal began Friday and runs through Jan. 5.
Schmaltz is a native of Verona, Wisconsin. He has three goals and 12 assists in 15 games for UND this season.

Gophers Get Down To Business As Bowl Game Nears

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — It's down to business for the Gophers football squad.
The University of Minnesota team is on the ground in Orlando, Florida ahead of its Jan. 1 Citrus Bowl matchup with Missouri. The Gophers were headed to a high school field Friday for a 75-minute practice.
This is the team's first January bowl appearance since 1962.

When Would You Like To Chat Sports?

We are looking for ways to draw more interest in the Press & Dakotan Sports Chat with James Cimburek and Jeremy Hoeck, which currently runs Wednesday afternoons from 3:30-4:30 p.m.
If a different time slot would make it easier for you to participate, let us know and we will consider moving the chat to a different time or a different day of the week. Tweet at @YanktonSports, email sports@yankton.net or call us at 1-605-665-7811, ext. 106 to let us know.
The weekly chat will return on Wednesday, Jan. 7.

Mount Marty Youth Basketball Tournaments Set

Mount Marty College will host several youth basketball tournaments in the coming months: Jan. 24 and March 7. Games will be played at Laddie E. Cimpl Arena, with cost based on the number of games played.
Each tournament is open to boys' and girls' teams in grades 4-7. For more information, contact Andy Bernatow at abernatow@mimc.edu.

Vikings Thin At Linebacker For Finale Vs. Bears

EDEN PRAIRIE, Minn. (AP) — Minnesota Vikings linebacker Chad Greenway is questionable for the season finale because of a knee injury.
Greenway didn't practice all week. Coach Mike Zimmer said he probably could have participated Friday, but the team didn't want to risk aggravation.
Greenway's backup, Brandon Watts, was ruled out with a hamstring injury. The starter at the other outside spot, Anthony Barr, is also out with a knee

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SCOREBOARD

Table with BOWLING and CROFTON, NEB. sections. Includes individual game results and team series information.

AREA CALENDAR

Table with BASKETBALL, BOYS' and BASKETBALL, GIRLS' sections. Lists various tournaments and events with dates and locations.

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No. 24 Colo. State Off To Best Start

FORT COLLINS, Colo. (AP) — The cohesion was instant at Colorado State, even with all the transfers and junior college additions.
That's because of video game sessions in the locker room after practice. And bowling nights. And movie matinees. And watching fighter Floyd Mayweather Jr.'s last bout at the home of guard Gian Clavell, who whipped up his famed Puerto Rican chicken-and-ricedish his mom taught him to make.
The 24th-ranked Rams are a tight-knit group of overlooked vagabonds arriving from the University of Arizona, Navy, North Carolina Central, Northwest Kansas Technical College, Southern Illinois and places in between.
Colorado State possesses an attitude — picked fifth in the Mountain West preseason poll — and a savvy coach in Larry Eustachy who melds the pieces seamlessly together, helping the Rams (12-0) to their best start in school history. They're one of eight remaining unbeaten teams heading into a game at New Mexico State on Saturday, but will be without starting center Tiel Daniels (calf) and key reserve Clavell (shoulder) as they stay behind for treatment.
"The whole team is filled with chips on their shoulders," said Stanton Kidd, a forward from Baltimore who transferred in from North Carolina Central. "Colorado State never gets the respect we deserve. But we don't really care. We just want to win."
It's easy to see why the Rams didn't receive a whole lot of preseason love: They had a largely unknown group.
Sure, senior sharp-shooter Daniel Bejarano was back, along with senior post player J.J. Avila, who played at Navy before his arrival at Colorado

State last season. After that, no one really knew much about the Rams' ensemble.
But they had three players in Daniels (Southern Illinois), John Gillon (Arkansas-Little Rock) and Stanton who practiced all last year even as they sat out under the NCAA transfer rule. So, they had a built-in familiarity.
Clavell, a junior college arrival from Caguas, Puerto Rico, fit right in as well, holding dinner parties for the team off the court as the team cooked on it.
"We don't care who scores the most points or who got the most rebounds," Bejarano said. "We have that feel of a brotherhood, of a family. We just find ways to win."
Colorado State captured the Great Alaska Shootout title in November and turned heads with a 62-60 win at Colorado on Dec. 10. After a nail-biting 85-84 victory at Denver last week, the Rams appeared in the polls for the first time since February 2013.
It also marked the first time in school history that both the basketball and football programs made a Top 25 appearance in the same season. The football team finished 10-3 and recently replaced Jim McElwain, who left for Florida, with former Georgia offensive coordinator Mike Bobo.
Eustachy knew this team had a chance to be special, because "it's fun going to practice," he said.
The good times don't end there. The players go to movies, bowl and play video games as a team.
"That's just us being us," Bejarano said. "That closeness shows up in the games, too."
Colorado State marches to the beat of Bejarano, a second-team all-Mountain West player a season ago. He

FOOTBALL

Table with NCAA FCS PLAYOFFS, CHAMPIONSHIP, and FBS PLAYOFFS sections. Lists game results and scores.

NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE

Table with AMERICAN CONFERENCE and NATIONAL CONFERENCE sections. Lists game results and scores.

SUNDAY'S GAMES

Table with SUNDAY'S GAMES section. Lists game results and scores.

TRANSACTIONS

Table with BASEBALL, NATIONAL LEAGUE, and NATIONAL HOCKEY LEAGUE sections. Lists player movements and transactions.

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Smith

had so few symptoms. "If you would take another shot there and the laceration would increase, then you have a medical emergency," Burkholder said. "This is a 1-in-100 find for our doctors because he didn't have any signs of a spleen (injury)."
Burkholder said scans also revealed a slight enlargement of the spleen, and Smith will have more testing to determine why that's the case. Burkholder said it may just be natural.
"It's a non-surgical case. It will heal on its own, but he is going to have to have some time down from contacts and

collisions," Burkholder said. "I won't go as far as to say that we saved a life, but you saved something that could go on Sunday."
Daniel, who started nearby at Missouri, was acquired by the Chiefs last season. He's appeared in only seven games since, mostly in mop-up duty, but was 21 of 30 for 200 yards with a TD pass and no interceptions in that 27-24 loss to San Diego last year.
"We have a sharp game plan this week. We're excited about it," Daniel said after Friday's workout, "and it was great to get out here and go over the entire game plan."

Huskers

efficiency is currently better than USC's season record of 164.6 by Mark Sanchez in 2008. He has thrown for 3,505 yards and 36 touchdowns, with just four interceptions.
AMEER ABDULLAH: Despite being slowed by a sprained left knee suffered Nov. 1 against Purdue, the Nebraska running back will finish one of the most prolific careers in Nebraska history. With 1,523 yards, he has registered his third straight 1,000-yard season, a first in Cornhuskers history. He has

4,500 career yards, trailing only Mike Rozier's record 4,780 yards.
BITTERSWEET: Cotton's time at Nebraska is coming to an end. A 1983 Cornhuskers graduate, he has been on the staff as associate head coach for the past seven seasons, and has eight seasons total as an assistant at Nebraska, where he's coached his sons. "I've had a nice seven-year run here and I've been very blessed," he said. "Even though it's kind of a sad time, it's coming to an end. I couldn't have been more blessed to be back at Nebraska."
BEST TEAM: Sarkisian said the combination of Abdullah and quarterback

Tommy Armstrong Jr. make the Cornhuskers the best team the Trojans have faced this year. "Every run you can think of, they have, whether it's the fly sweep, whether it's a designed quarterback runs, whether it's the traditional run game, and they do it with tempo," Sarkisian said. "Makes it really, really difficult, makes it hard."
QUOTABLE: "If I'm the Holiday Bowl, I'm pretty ecstatic that I've got USC and Nebraska in this game," Sarkisian said. "Two Top 25 teams in America that have traditional programs that have won Heisman trophies, national championships and a bunch of other accolades. This is a heck of a game."

NFC North

chart at center. He might be matched up against defensive lineman Mike Daniels, one of the keys to the Packers' improved play of late against the rush.
RUNNING MEN: Welcome back, Reggie Bush. The veteran, who has been slowed by injuries this season, had seven carries for 54 yards and a touchdown last week against the Bears, while also catching six passes for 44 yards.
The Packers' running game has improved in the second half of the season following a sluggish start, which included a 76-yard outing in the Week 3 loss at Detroit. Eddie Lacy, who is over the 1,000-yard mark for the second straight season,

and James Starks will have to earn yards against the Lions' stout run defense.
CLAY-MAKER: Packers' linebacker Clay Matthews is on a pass-rushing roll with 5 1/2 sacks in his last three games to get to 10 on the season.
"The one thing you look for more im-

portant than the sacks is the pressure that's being generated, and I felt myself around the quarterback a lot these last several games," Matthews said.
Green Bay has 10 sacks overall in its last two games.

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