

The Bond That Unites



P&D FILE PHOTOS
South Dakota freshman guard Allison Arens (left photo, diving on left) and junior forward Bridget Arens (right photo, with ball) compete for the Coyotes in recent home games. The sisters and Crofton, Nebraska, natives grew up working hard together off the court and have continued that tight bond on the court at USD.

Arens Sisters Enjoying Time Together At USD

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CROFTON, Neb. – When you grow up on a farm, you have no choice but to be diligent and hard-working. Hay bales need to be moved around. Crops need constant attention. Animals need feeding. It was from this lifestyle that sisters Bridget and Allison Arens eventually became basketball stars. Their aggressive, physical style on the court belied their quiet, unassuming nature away from it. That’s what farm life does to you: It toughens you up. “They don’t just work hard at basketball, they work hard at home and work hard in school,” said Aaron Losing, who coached the sisters at Crofton (Nebraska) High School. “It’s a very natural thing that their family teaches them.” Those qualities are now on full display at the Division I level for the University of South Dakota, where the sisters – Bridget a 6-foot junior forward and Allison a 5-9 freshman guard – both see significant time for the Coyotes. After two years apart (as far apart as the tight-knit sisters will allow), they’re back on the same team. “I think we’d both agree, it’s kind of a dream come true,” Allison said. “She always has my back, that’s a bonus. “It’s been pretty cool.” For anyone who has spent any time around the Arens family – father Gary, mother Joselyn, four girls, two boys – the notion that Allison would follow Bridget to Vermillion was far from a surprise. There was no social media announce-

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AARON LOSING, CROFTON HS GIRLS’ BASKETBALL COACH

ment or email sent out announcing Allison’s decision, she just decided and moved on. Moved on to leading Crofton to two more Nebraska state championships after Bridget had graduated. “Those two have a pretty good bond, and when Bridget committed there, I think it was something that Allison obviously paid attention to,” Losing said. “I had a feeling that those two would want to stick together.” And that’s usually where you’ll find the sisters: Together. On an already tight-knit USD squad, the Arens sisters are especially close, Coyote coach Amy Williams said – while pointing out that this is the first set of siblings she’s ever coached. “It’s really fun,” Williams said. “It’s fun to watch how they just really have this unique bond, and the way they have each other’s back.” When you’ve played together since elementary school, there tends to be a nonverbal bond developed on the court, as well. “There’s a special thing there where they really don’t even have to communicate, they can just look at each other and know,” said Williams, whose team faced Illinois on Tuesday night. The same things teams across Nebraska discovered about the Arens sisters are now the things USD is seeing

up close: Bridget is a reliable scoring and rebounding threat in the post, and Allison is one of those do-it-all point guards. Heading into the game at Illinois, Bridget was averaging 4.3 points and 3.8 rebounds in 16 minutes off the bench, while Allison was averaging 2.6 points and 2.0 rebounds in 10 minutes. While there are certainly times during the course of a game where the sisters are on the floor together, it’s those moments outside of basketball where the relationship is strongest. “It’s kind of nice when you walk back to your dorm room and you always have someone to talk to about stuff, whether it’s basketball or school-related,” Bridget said. “I like the big sister role, I guess.” The oldest of four sisters (Allison, Monica and Alexis), Bridget undoubtedly helped foster her sisters’ passion for the game during those early, formative years on the family farm. When it came time to step on the basketball court, that work ethic came along. “A lot of them start putting in the work at a young age, in third and fourth grade,” said Losing, who has guided Crofton to seven state championships. “They kind of developed a real love for the game.” Once at the varsity level in Crofton, the sisters thrived.

Bridget would score 1,336 career points, while Allison would score 1,579 points and drain 220 career three-pointers (which ranks ninth all-time in Nebraska). Crofton would win four state titles (2012-2015) with the sisters on the same team, the last two apart. Seeing players go on to the college level is, however, nothing new for Losing. There are about a dozen such former standouts go on to the next level – a list that includes former USD star Amber Hegge. Allison, in particular, was a highly sought-after Division I prospect, but in the end chose to follow her sister to Vermillion. “When you look at all the girls that have come through here, she’s one of the most talented ones,” Losing said of Allison. “That alone gives her some credentials to be able to play at a pretty high level.” Still, for as successful as Crofton was throughout her career, there was a natural adjustment period necessary for Allison. Put another way: It’s a far jump from high school basketball to Division I basketball. When you’re thrust into a situation where you know you’re going to be counted on right away as a freshman, it’s at least nice to have your sister there with you. Just ask Allison. “I wouldn’t say I’m fully adjusted yet, I’m still learning a lot,” she said. “It’s been a great experience.”

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No. 1 Warriors Hold Off Gazelles

SIoux FALLS – After trailing by 19 points in the third quarter, the Yankton Gazelles came up a little short in Tuesday night’s 57-48 girls’ basketball loss against Sioux Falls Washington in Sioux Falls. The hometown Warriors won despite shooting 29 percent from the field and despite not scoring a basket for the final 3:44 of the fourth quarter. The difference, though, was a 21-of-35 effort at the free throw line for Washington. Yankton was 16-of-24 at the free throw line, but couldn’t overcome a 6-point third quarter, and 20 turnovers for the game. Washington led 29-22 at halftime and saw its lead reach 19 in the third quarter. Down by that much at the time, Yankton coach Trey Krier said he told his players during a timeout to do what they could to get the deficit down to 10. “That’s a characteristic that we haven’t seen from our girls, even last year, the ability to fight back like that,” Krier said. “We did a great job of taking care of the ball and being aggressive in that span to get it close.” Madason Tessier led the Gazelles (1-3) with 12 points, while Bailey Kortan added nine points, and Becky Frick contributed eight points and seven rebounds. Sophie Drotzmann posted seven points and four rebounds, and Lindsey Hale added six points and five rebounds for Yankton, which is now off until Dec. 2 when it hosts Pierre. It will be a much-needed break for the Gazelles, who had 10 days of practice and then right into four games before the Christmas break. “We’ll give them a little bit of a break,” Krier said. “It was a little helter skelter there for a while, but now we’ll catch our breath and let them spend some time with family.” Washington (3-2) got 13 points and seven rebounds from Anna Goodhope, and 11 points each from Jada Cunningham and Taylor VanderVelde. Washington also won all three sub-varsity games, including 58-40 in the JV contest. Aurora Papstein led Yankton with 12 points and five rebounds, while Oswald added 11 points and Reinhardt scored seven points. The Warriors won the sophomore game 42-41. Yankton got 13 points from Papstein and six points from Maddy Hochstein. YANKTON (1-3) Madason Tessier 4-6 4-5 12; Brianna Benjamin 0-0 0-0 0; Becky Frick 3-15 2-2 8; Kylie Rodig 0-0 0-0 0; Josie Sayler 3-4 0-1 6; Bailey Kortan 3-8 2-6 9; Jessica Reinhardt 0-1 0-0 0; Emily Oswald 0-4 0-0 0; Sophie Drotzmann 1-4 5-6 7; Lindsey Hale 1-6 3-4 6. TOTALS 15-48 16-24 48. S.F. WASHINGTON (3-2)

Bucks Upend No. 1 Washington

SIoux FALLS – Three days after scoring 23 points in a loss, the Yankton Bucks exploded for 75 points in a crucial district win Tuesday night, 75-70 at top-ranked Sioux Falls Washington. On a night when the Bucks made 13 three-pointers, Brady Sorenson scored 31 points and grabbed seven rebounds. Matthew Mors was 5-of-9 on three-pointers for 15 points and Blake Savey added 15 points. The results were a far cry from Saturday’s 23-point offensive output, according to head coach Chris Haynes. “It’s amazing what the ball going in the basket a couple times can do for you,” he said. “When the shots weren’t going, our body language wasn’t good, but the energy came back when we made a few,” he added. “We just played and competed really well tonight.” Sorenson, a senior, made 10-of-15 shots from the field, including 2-of-6 on three-pointers and 7-of-12 at the free throw line. “He’s such a tough matchup,” Haynes said. “He can beat you from the outside and he can post you up. His versatility is really hard to guard, and it’s something we’re trying to utilize.” The key for the Bucks, as well, is to find consistent scoring outside of the senior tandem of Sorenson and Frick, according to Haynes. And that’s what they saw Tuesday, he said. Washington led 54-51 after three quarters and finished the game with a 41-21 edge on rebounds. Yankton, however, committed only four turnovers and shot 48 percent from the field to head into the Christmas

break at 3-1. The Bucks are off until Jan. 2 when they host Pierre. It’s a break Haynes said the program enjoys, because of the post-holiday grind. “We really like this kind of time off,” he said. “Our kids get to spend some time with family. Once we all get back next Monday, we go hard for the next two months or so.” Washington (3-1), meanwhile got 19 points off the bench from Angel Arroyo, and 12 points and eight rebounds from Sam Gezehagne. Jack Talley chipped in with 11 points, eight rebounds and four assists. Washington won the junior varsity game 69-59. Yankton got 13 points from Trevor Rafferty and nine points from Jack Wolfgang. In the freshman game, Rex Ryken scored 21 points for Yankton in a 56-50 loss. Ethan Wishon added 11 points for the Bucks. YANKTON (3-1) Nate Stephenson 0-0 0-0 0; Tanner Frick 4-7 1-5 11; Blake Savey 4-10 4-7 15; Syd Boots 0-2 0-0 0; Brady Sorenson 11-17 7-12 31; Cameron Krejci 0-0 0-0 0; Jack Wolfgang 0-3 0-0 0; Casey Krejci 1-3 0-0 3; Matthew Mors 5-10 0-0 15; Jordan Payer 0-0 0-0 0. TOTALS 25-52 12-24 75. S.F. WASHINGTON (3-1) Jack Talley 4-9 1-2 11; Carter Keller 2-11 4-4 9; Sam Gezehagne 5-7 2-3 12; Logan Uttecht 2-4 1-2 6; Isaac Goeman 3-3 0-0 6; Landon Carda 1-1 0-0 2; Jacob Skogstad 1-1 0-0 3; Angel Arroyo 8-12 2-2 19; Zach Heins 1-2 0-0 2. TOTALS 27-50 10-14 70. YANKTON.....8 33 54 75 S.F. WASHINGTON.....17 36 54 70 Three-Pointers: Yankton 13-32 (Mors 5-9, Savey 3-7, Frick 2-3, Sorenson 2-6, Krejci 1-2, Boots 0-2), Washington 6-12 (Talley 2-2, Uttecht 1-1, Skogstad 1-1, Arroyo 1-2, Keller 1-6). Total Rebounds: Washington 41 (Uttecht 9), Yankton 21 (Sorenson 7). Assists: Washington 11 (Talley 4), Yankton 9 (Frick 3). Personal Fouls: Washington 23, Yankton 15. Fouled Out: Gezehagne. Turnovers: Washington 15, Yankton 4.

Other Games
Vermillion 56,
Tri-Valley 55
VERMILLION – Cooper Williams scored 16 points



JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D
Andes Central-Dakota Christian’s Chase Pfeifer gets inside the Scotland defense for a basket during their boys’ basketball game on Tuesday in Scotland.