

South Dakota Sportswriters 2015 Awards

College Women's Athlete Of The Year

Nicole Seekamp
USD Basketball

Had the NCAA not decided to give Nicole Seekamp a fourth year of eligibility, the guard from Renmark, South Australia would still have finished her career as one of the top players in South Dakota women's basketball history: A two-time Summit League Tournament MVP. Two-time first-team all-Summit League. Three Summit League tournament championship appearances, with a title in 2014. Top-10 in Coyote history in points (1,484), assists (396) and steals (176).

But, after sitting out the first two games of the season (a condition of her being granted a fourth season), Seekamp is back and continuing to lead the Coyotes into uncharted territory. After USD lost both games without Seekamp, the Coyotes have gone 9-2 with her, with losses at Kansas State and to Washington as the only blemishes on the record. The Summit League Preseason Player of the Year is once again leading the Coyotes in scoring (14.6 ppg), assists (6.5 apg) and steals (3.6 spg), as well as free throw percentage (.861).

Past Winners

1979, Yvette Greer, South Dakota; 1980, Cindy Heyden, Augustana; 1981, Elaine Kempf, S.D. State; 1982, Cathy Coyle, Northern; 1983, Carin Doyle, S.D. State; 1984, Kristin Asp, S.D. State; 1985, Jenny Johnson, S.D. State; 1986, Amy Jorgenson, Augustana; 1987, Karla Stevenson, S.D. State; 1988, Renate Sluys, Mount Marty; 1989, Diana Burkard, Mount Marty; 1990, Linda Gdowski, South Dakota; 1991, Julie Krauth, Augustana; 1992, Heather Andrews, South Dakota; 1993, Amy Von Wald, Northern; 1994, Ann Westby, S.D. State; 1995, Julie Jensen, Northern State; 1996, Janna Austin Aslesen, Sioux Falls; 1997, Debby Volkers, Augustana; 1998, Elena Swan, South Dakota; 1999, Lisa Bomengen, Black Hills State; 2000, Jami Barraclough, S.D. Tech; 2001, Sara Deckert, South Dakota; 2002, Randi Morgan, Dakota Wesleyan; 2003, Mandy Koupal, South Dakota; 2004, Mandy Koupal, South Dakota; 2005, Shannon Schlagel, S.D. State; 2006, Melissa Gamble, Northern State; 2007, Megan Vogel, South



Dakota State; 2008, Emma Erickson, South Dakota; 2009, Jennifer Warkentien, South Dakota State; 2010, Amanda Madden, Northern State; 2011, Bethany Buell, South Dakota; 2012, Amber Hegge, South Dakota; 2013, Bethany (Buell) Firsick, South Dakota; 2014, Emily Grove, South Dakota; 2015, Nicole Seekamp, South Dakota.

Repeat selections for Becky Hammon as the state's sports celebrity and Robert Kokesh as the state's "independent" male athlete of the year highlight the state's annual sports honors, as selected by the South Dakota Sportswriters Association.

Honors were selected for an athlete, coach and team for the prep and collegiate level, as well as "independent" athletes and team, and the sports "celebrity" of the year. "Independent" is defined as an athlete who either competes in a non-school sanctioned sport within the state, or a South Dakota native competing outside the state.

Here is a look at each award winner:

Prep Boys' Coach Of The Year

Arlin Likness
Yankton Football

After Yankton ended its 12-year championship drought with an undefeated season and the 2014 Class 11AA championship, the Bucks graduated several key personnel. As the Bucks began the 2015 season, they lost two more key pieces – their starting quarterback and tight end – to season-ending injuries.

After those blows, coach Arlin Likness and his staff retooled the team, going from a high-flying passing offense to a shifty running attack, and returned to the top of Class 11AA yet again.

The championship was Likness' fourth as a head coach at Yankton. Likness ranks fourth all-time and second among active coaches in South Dakota with 254 victories.



Past Winners

1954, Lars Overskei, Yankton football; 1955, Wally Diehl, S.F. Washington basketball; 1956, Ron Freemole, Mitchell track; 1957, Lou Graslle, Belle Fourche basketball; 1958, Rolie Greeno, Milbank football; 1959, Gus Kolb, Cheyenne basketball; 1960, Gene Peters, Huron football; 1961, John DeWitt, Watertown football; 1962, Dennis Bies, Tabor football; 1963, Burdell Coplan, Canton football; 1964, Jim Cordes, Howard basketball; 1965, Mel Minton, Rapid City track; 1966, Howard Taplett, Tyndall track; 1967, Bob Schroeder, Miller football; 1968, Arne Bauer, S.F. Lincoln track; 1969, Dave Strain, Rapid City basketball; 1970, Rich Greeno, S.F. Lincoln track; 1971, Max Hawk, Yankton football; 1972, Dale McElhany, Watertown football; 1973, Marv Sherrill, Watertown wrestling; 1974, Larry Ireland, Hot Springs football; 1975, Francis Zacher, Aberdeen Roncalli basketball; 1976, Tom Long, R.C. Stevens wrestling; 1977, Gene Brees, R.C. Stevens track; 1978, Bob Winter, Yankton basketball; 1979, Burnell Glanzer, Armour basketball; 1980, Dave Strain, R.C. Central basketball; 1981, Bob Burns, S.F. O'Gorman football; 1982, Bob Judson, Pierre basketball; 1983, John Odney, S.F. Washington basketball; 1984, Steve Entringer, Tripp football; 1985,

Lyle Claussen, Brandon Valley track and cross country; 1986, Gary Munsen, Mitchell basketball; 1987, Jesse Mendoza, Pine Ridge basketball; 1988, Steve Kueter, S.F. O'Gorman football; 1989, Jay Hennies, Vermillion basketball; 1990, Mike Klmedinst, Brandon Valley football; 1991, Fran Esser, Redfield wrestling; 1992, Larry Luitjens, Custer basketball; 1993, Steve Keuter, S.F. O'Gorman football; 1994, Max Hawk, Yankton football; 1995, Jim Miner, Yankton football; 1996, Gary Munsen, Mitchell basketball; 1997, Jim Uttecht, West Central football; 1998, Gary Maffett, Brookings football; 1999, Jim Aisenbrey, Freeman football; 2000, Myron Steffen, Stickney-Mount

Vernon football; 2001, Doug Schooley, Watertown football; 2002, Larry Luitjens, Custer boys basketball; 2003, Marv Sherrill, Watertown wrestling; 2004, Steve Gilbertson, Arlington football; 2005, Gary Munsen, Mitchell basketball; 2006, Brent DeBoer, Sioux Falls Roosevelt football; 2007, Bob Graham, Scotland football; 2008, Brian Norberg, Watertown basketball; 2009, Brian Hermansen, S.F. Washington basketball; 2010, Michael Ricke, Madison basketball; 2011, Wade Rausch, Webster wrestling; 2012, Adolph Shepardson, Deubrook football; 2013, Jayson Poppinga, Pierre football; 2014, Larry Luitjens, Custer basketball; 2015, Arlin Likness, Yankton football.

Independent Male Athlete Of The Year

Robert Kokesh
Wagner (Nebraska)

While Robert Kokesh may not have had the perfect ending for his collegiate wrestling career, he came pretty close.

Kokesh went 39-1 in his senior season for the University of Nebraska, taking an undefeated record into the NCAA Tournament on the way to a third place finish. The All-American finish was the Wagner native's third of his career, a resume that includes two Big Ten titles and 144 victories, second all-time in Husker history.

Kokesh remains involved with the Husker program, serving as a volunteer administrative assistant for the Huskers. He graduated from the University of Nebraska with a degree in agronomy this past August.

Past Winners

1958, Carl Hertz, Menno, baseball; 1959, John Enright, Sioux Falls, golf; 1960, Vern McKee, Yankton, baseball; 1961, Phil Donohue, Sioux Falls, golf; 1962, Indy Titterington, Yankton, women's golf; 1963, Bob Marske, Andover, basketball; 1964, Alan Cooke, Sioux Falls, golf; 1965, Kathy Kober, Rapid City, women's golf; 1966, Dave Danielson, Yankton, bowling; 1967, George Meyers, Rapid City, golf; 1968, Dave Weber, Sioux Falls, tennis; 1969, Stan Opp, Aberdeen, wrestling; 1970, Jim Ahern, Yankton, golf; 1971, Lee Goldammer, Canova, baseball; 1972, Doug Stanford, Rapid City, basketball and baseball; 1973, Pat Jefferson, Rapid City, boxing; 1974, Rick Crain, Rapid City, weightlifting; 1975, Leigh Dunker, Warner, horseshoe pitching; 1976, Dave Hanten, Sioux Falls, golf; 1977, Curt Fredrickson, Aberdeen, baseball; 1978, Larry Slupe, Sioux Falls, Wheelchair Games, swimming; 1979, Randy Lewis, Rapid City, wrestling; 1980, Scott Swisher, Aberdeen, swimming; 1981, Curt Byrum, Onida, golf; 1982, Greg Haydenluck, USD, decathlon; 1983, Dennis Koslowski, Doland, wrestling; 1984, Randy Lewis, Rapid City, wrestling; 1985, Bob Beattie, Aberdeen, amateur baseball; 1986, Bill and Jim Scherr, Moberge, wrestling; 1987, Chuck Richards, Rapid City, boxing; 1988, Dan Stier, Aberdeen,

baseball; 1989, Mark Mortenson, Sioux Falls, wheelchair athletics;

1990, Mike Brummer, Rapid City, golf; 1991, Chad McConnell, Sioux Falls, baseball; 1992, Dennis Koslowski, St. Louis Park, Minn., Greco-Roman wrestling; 1993, Lincoln McIlravy, Iowa State, wrestling; 1994, Ben Thomas, Rapid City, baseball; 1995, Ryan Jansa, New Mexico State, golf; 1996, Greg Jimmerson, Stanford, cross country; 1997, Lincoln McIlravy, Iowa, wrestling; 1998, Kevin Leighton, Madison, amateur baseball; 1999, Brock Lesnar, Minnesota, wrestling; 2000, Lincoln McIlravy, Philip, wrestling; 2001, Billy Etbauer, Ree Heights, rodeo; 2002, Paul Schock, Sioux Falls, golf; 2003, Scott Rislov, San Jose State, football; 2004, Chad Greenway, Iowa, football; 2005, Jeff Willert, Belvidere, rodeo; 2006, Chad Ferley, Oelrichs, rodeo; 2007, Taylor Mehlhaff, Aberdeen (Wisconsin), football; 2008, Joe Krabbenhoff, Sioux Falls (Wisconsin), basketball; 2009, Kevin Leighton, Madison, baseball; 2010, Bill Harcastle, Moberge (Purdue), track; 2011, Riley Reiff, Parkston (Iowa), football; 2012, Shane Van Boening, Rapid City, billiards; 2013, Colton Iverson, Yankton (Colorado State), basketball; 2014, Robert Kokesh, Wagner (Nebraska), wrestling; 2015, Robert Kokesh, Wagner (Nebraska), wrestling.

20 win over conference co-champion Illinois State and racked up 180 yards during a 30-23 defeat of South Dakota the following week in Vermillion.

SDSU finished 8-4 and qualified for the FCS Playoffs for the fourth consecutive season. Trailing Montana 24-0 at halftime in the first round, Wieneke sparked a second-half rally by picking up nearly all of his 128 yards after the break. The Jackrabbits, however, came up short in a 24-17 loss.

Wieneke earned All-America first-team honors from multiple outlets, including the Associated Press. His 1,472 receiving yards are the 24th-most in a season in FCS history.

Wieneke tied the MVFC record – and broke the school record – for TD catches with 16 as a freshman in 2014. His 1,404 yards that year rank fourth all-time in the conference.

On the MVFC's career charts, Wieneke is tied for sixth in TD catches (27), seventh in receiving yards (2,876) and 20th in receptions (145). At SDSU, he ranks second, third and sixth, respectively, in the three categories.

College Men's Coach

Matt Wilber, DWU Basketball

In just his second year as a head basketball coach, Matt Wilber guided the Dakota Wesleyan University men's team to the best season in school history.

Under Wilber, the 2014-15 Tigers won a program-best 32 games, set a record for most points in a season (3,166) and advanced further than any prior DWU men's basketball team in a postseason tournament. He also guided the Tigers to their first GPAC regular season title since 2009 and the team finished with a conference record of 17-3.

The Tigers reached NAIA Division II National Tournament championship game, falling to Davenport (Mich.) 66-45 in the title game.

A Miller native, Wilber was named the NAIA coach of the year and coached three all-Americans.

Wilber, who was an assistant under Scott Nagy at South Dakota State, as well as stints at the University of Sioux Falls and Augustana, had a career mark of 50-19 overall in his first two seasons with DWU.

Last 5 Honorees
2014, Dave Gottsleben
2013, Tracy Heilman
2012, John Stiegelmeier
2011, Tom Billeter
2010, Mike Aldrich

College Men's Team

Augustana Basketball

Tom Billeter's squad boasted two conference player of the year winners – Dan Jansen won the overall award, while Casey Schilling won defensive player of the year – so that should give you a hint of the absurd talent that carried the Vikings during their 31-3 season.

With a lineup full of shooters, Augustana regularly scored more than 90 points or more, at one time eclipsing that mark five times in a row in the middle of conference play, and rolled through the NSIC tournament before falling to Northwest Missouri State in the second round of the NCAA tourney.

This year, the Vikings have basically everybody back from last season's squad, and they've already enacted revenge on Northwest by beating them at home on a Jansen buzzer-beating three.

Last 5 Honorees
2014, Augie Baseball
2013, SDSU Basketball
2012, SDSU Basketball
2011, Augie Baseball
2010, MMC Baseball

Aldridge is 98-47 in his five seasons at Northern State.

College Women's Team

Augustana Softball

The Vikings' season didn't have a spectacular start – a 4-3 stint between the team's two early-season tournaments – and Augustana lost in the NSIC championship and its NCAA super regional, but the in-between was absolutely spectacular.

Head coach Gretta Melsted's squad started the regular season conference slate on a 19-game winning streak and finished the season 53-11, ranked No. 11 in the NFCA Top 25 poll. The Vikings had three players finish with an on-base percentage over .500, and Caitlin Nichol tied for first in the country with 23 home runs.

Last 5 Honorees
2014, Luke Loudenburg
2013, Augie Basketball
2012, SDSU Basketball
2011, Augie X-Country
2010, DWU Golf

Prep Boys Athlete

Matt Farniok, Washington football

A 6-foot-6, 320-pound anchor on the offensive line for the state champion Warriors, Farniok could be more accurately described as a wrecking ball. No local product in recent history bullied the opposition quite like Farniok, who played a key role in leading the Warrior offense to over 4,500 yards of offense and 56 touchdowns, including 230 yards a game on the ground.

"Watching some of the stuff Matt does, you just shake your head," said Coach Chad Stadem. "I've never seen anything like it. I've never seen anyone completely dominate a position."

Farniok's senior season put an exclamation point on a decorated career that includes multiple player of the year honors (Argus Leader Elite 45 Captain, Gatorade Player of the Year). The left tackle's most prized possession, though, is Washington's championship trophy. Against an O'Gorman front resolved to take away the run, Farniok helped set a clean pocket for Jack Schelhaas, who passed for a season-high 316 yards as the Warriors nabbed a 27-24 comeback win.

Intensely recruited from high-level programs from all of the Power Five conferences, Farniok has narrowed his college search to

Last 5 Honorees
2014, Luke Loudenburg
2013, Lane Severyn
2012, Alex Kocer
2011, Tony Smoragiewicz
2010, Matt Hermansen

College Men's Athlete

Jake Wieneke, SDSU Football

The sophomore wide receiver got off to a fast start and broke another notable Missouri Valley Football Conference mark in the process.

Wieneke totaled a single-season league record 1,472 receiving yards this year. He had 72 receptions and 11 touchdowns.

Wieneke got things going with a an eight-catch, 160-yard, two-touchdown game in a 41-38 win over Kansas – the Jackrabbits' first defeat of an FBS school in the Division I era.

He torched Big Sky Conference champion Southern Utah for 205 yards and two TDs on 11 receptions during a 55-10 shellacking of the Thunderbirds.

Wieneke's third game saw him pick up 163 yards and two more scores on seven catches in a win over Robert Morris.

He later posted five straight 100-yard games to close out the season. Of note during the stretch, he had two touchdowns in a 25-

Last 5 Honorees
2014, Zach Zenner
2013, Layne Somsen
2012, Nate Walters
2011, Nate Walters
2010, Jon Ryan