

NASCAR

From Page 8A

in it," said teammate Mark Martin. "He's incredibly driven to have the success, and his team is behind it. I think you'll see a spectacular year for him."

Boy, does he need one. NASCAR's most popular driver had his confidence shattered in a winless 2009 season. He failed to make the Chase for the Sprint Cup championship, his crew chief was fired midseason and he managed just five top-10 finishes all year.

His teammates, meanwhile, combined for 13 victories and swept the top three spots in the final season standings. The lack of production increased the already-bright spotlight on Earnhardt, who found there was little escape from the scrutiny on his lack of performance. At the halfway point of the season, he revealed a fear of not being strong enough to handle the strain of another trying season.

"I can't have another year like this. I can't mentally. I can't physically. I don't want to put the people around me through this,"

Earnhardt admitted. "When we were really, really struggling, everybody in the family was upset. Crying and carrying on. All the women were crying, the men were cussing. I'm serious."

"We can't put anybody through this (stuff) again. We've got to get this right."

Team owner Rick Hendrick agreed, and made fixing Earnhardt's No. 88 team the top off-season priority at Hendrick Motorsports.

It came all hands on deck as Hendrick leaned on Martin crew chief Alan Gustafson to help Earnhardt's team. Gustafson allowed two of his crew members — including his lead race engineer — to move over to the No. 88, and he agreed to work with Earnhardt crew chief Lance McGrew to create a partnership similar to the one Jimmie Johnson and Jeff Gordon have used with smashing success.

Johnson, who displays the trophies from his four consecutive championships in his office above the shop floor where Earnhardt's cars are built, believes Hendrick has executed the best possible plan for Earnhardt to succeed.

"It's been tough on him. I think his confidence has been beat down some, and I think the unification between the 88 and the 5 is very

good for him," Johnson said. "He looks up to Mark. He seems to respond very well to folks that have been around the sport for a long time. Mark is more than willing, especially if Junior engages himself and asks the right questions."

But, Johnson cautioned, it's going to take a willingness for Earnhardt to open up more to his teammates.

"He can't do it on his own. He's been more internal and to himself on cars, setups, kind of been on his own little island," Johnson said. "If he really embraces the teammate standpoint and is right there alongside with Mark day in and day out, they'll get it figured out."

"It may take changes in driving style, a lot of things that aren't familiar to him, but he's gonna have every opportunity and we're making sure he does."

Earnhardt disagreed with Johnson's assessment. "You know, I think I'm kind of shy at times, but I've never really been against really working together and trying to take two teams and be stronger," he said.

His first chance to prove it comes Saturday night in the exhibition Budweiser Shootout, a race he's won twice before, including in his 2008 debut with Hendrick

Motorsports. He followed that with a victory five days later in one of Daytona's twin qualifying races, setting the stage for a potential sweep with a win in the 500.

He came up short with a ninth-place finish, but it raised expectations for the pairing of the popular driver with NASCAR's most successful team.

It never happened. Earnhardt won just once that season — his only points-race victory since joining HMS — and hit a slump when the Chase began. He never contended for the championship and finished last in the 12-driver field.

It only got worse last season, when he opened the year with a sub-par showing at Daytona, where he's won 12 races spanning NASCAR's top two series.

He wants to be back out front again, badly. He was for two laps Friday, and hopes to parlay that into a lot more.

"I'd like to be able to get back out there and start doing some of the things I should be doing and should have done last year. Should have done the year before," he said. "Win some races, be a prominent fixture in the top five every week. Win some more races."

GIRLS

From Page 8A

Dakota Valley's Alyssa Wall scored 11 points while Whitney Dunn added nine points.

Dakota Valley defeated the Huskies 27-23 in the junior varsity game while EPJ won the freshman game 26-19.

ELK POINT-JEFFERSON (12-4) 11 25 37 47
DAKOTA VALLEY (8-9) 8 20 28 38

Centerville 48, Hurley 32

HURLEY — The Centerville Tornados defeated the Hurley Bulldogs 48-32 on Friday night in Hurley.

Centerville's Kieran O'Malley scored 19 points while Sam Blake added 13 points and eight rebounds.

In the loss for the Lady Bulldogs (5-10), Ashley Boomgardner scored 13 points while Haley Jorgensen added eight rebounds.

Centerville hosts Canistota today (Saturday), while Hurley travels to Gayville on Monday

night to face the Gayville-Volin Raidersettes.
CENTERVILLE (8-9) 13 20 34 48
HURLEY (5-10) 5 15 21 32

Arlington 57, Deubrook Area 40

ARLINGTON — A 22-point outburst in the third quarter sent the Arlington Cardinals past Deubrook Area 57-40 on Friday night in Arlington.

Alecia Egeberg scored 15 points to lead the Cardinals (9-6), while Alli Boeck added 11 points and seven assists. Lanny Gross chipped in with eight points and seven rebounds.

Arlington led 27-21 at halftime but pulled in front 49-33 after three quarters.

In the loss for Deubrook Area (9-7), Ashton Buller posted a double-double with 10 points and 14 rebounds, while Jenna Roelofsen scored eight points.

Deubrook Area is at Elkton-Lake Benton today (Saturday), while Arlington plays Great Plains Lutheran in Watertown on Monday.

DEUBROOK AREA (9-7) 9 21 33 40
ARLINGTON (9-6) 15 27 49 57

BOYS

From Page 7A

In the loss for Menno (3-8), Macon Oplinger scored 11 points and Tyler Edler had 10 points.

Both teams continue play at the tournament today (Saturday) in Marion. Hanson plays Bridgewater-Emery at 1 p.m. and Menno plays Marion at 2:30 p.m.

MEENO (3-8) 12 23 38
HANSON (12-2) 24 40 50 61

Bridgewater-Emery 52, Freeman 28

MARION — Tyson Kayser had 18 points, nine rebounds and four blocks to lead Bridgewater-Emery past Freeman 52-28 in the second round of the Cornbelt Conference Tournament on Friday night in Marion.

The Huskies (9-4) led 26-16 at halftime and 38-23 after three quarters.

In the loss for the Flyers (1-12), Trey Waltner scored 14 points, while Spencer Becker added four points, three rebounds and three steals. Kevin Weber and Chet Hermesen each grabbed four rebounds.

Today (Saturday) in the final day of the tournament, Freeman plays Canistota at 4 p.m.

COLLEGE

From Page 7A

(18-of-30) from the field and scored 28 points in the paint in the half, while holding SIUE to 40 percent (12-of-30). Cain had 13 points, while Smith chipped in nine and Bouie had seven.

Senior forward Roman Gentry hit a quick three to open the second half and the Coyotes blew the game open from there with some near-flawless basketball. USD hit its first 11 shots of the half, including four treys, as the Coyotes didn't miss until Krogman couldn't connect on a three at the 10:57 mark. Smith, Cain, Bouie and junior guard Kendall Cutler all contributed to run the lead to as many as 19, before back-to-back treys from Krogman and another from Boots put USD up 68-43 with 12:58 left.

The Coyotes couldn't keep up the torrid pace, though, and SIUE cut the lead to 18 with just under 10 minutes left. Buckets from Krogman and free throws down the stretch allowed USD to take the advantage over 20 again and cruise from there. Krogman had 12 points in the half.

South Dakota returns to the friendly confines of the DakotaDome to begin a three-game homestand in Great West Conference play on Thursday. Tip off against Chicago State is set for 8 p.m.

SOUTH DAKOTA (13-9)

Roman Gentry 4-8 0-2 9; Kendall Cutler 2-2 4-8; Jake Thomas 1-5 2-4 4; Tyler Cain 7-10 2-4 16; Steve Smith 6-9 2-4 14; Mitchell Bouie 5-5 1-4 11; Louie Krogman 6-11 0-1 15; Jordan Boots 3-3 0-0 8; Conrad Knutwig 3-3 0-0 6; Dustin Tetzlaff 0-1 0-0 0. TOTALS 37-57 11-21 91.

SIUE-EDWARDSVILLE (3-20)

Cody Rincker 3-10 0-0 8; Stephen Jones 1-3 0-0 3; Nikola Bundalo 5-7 0-0 10; Denyko Bowles 5-8 3-4 14; Mark Yelovich 8-22 5-6 22; Kevin Stinesman 0-3 0-0 0; Anthony Mitchell 0-1 0-0 0; Dan Church 0-1 0-0 0; Desmond Young 2-3 2-3 6; David Boarden 2-7 0-0 4; Alex Newlin 1-3 0-0 2; Dobroje Mavrak 0-0 0-0 0; Zaka Schneider 0-1 0-0 0. TOTALS 27-69 10-33 69.

At The Half: USD 43, SIUE 31. Three-Pointers: USD 6-12 (Krogman 3-6, Boots 2-2, Gentry 1-2, Thomas 0-2), SIUE 5-23 (Rincker 2-8, Jones 1-3, Bowles 1-3, Yelovich 1-4, Stinesman 0-1, Church 0-1, Young 0-1, Boarden 0-1, Newlin 0-1). Total Rebounds: USD 39 (Cain 9), SIUE 32 (Bowles 8). Assists: USD 25 (Thomas 5), SIUE 20 (Rincker 6). Personal Fouls: SIUE 18, USD 12. Fouled Out: None. Attendance: 1,380.

Women

MINNESOTA-DULUTH 79, ST. CLOUD STATE 51: DULUTH, Minn. — Jheri Booker led four players in double figures as Minnesota-Duluth cruised past St. Cloud State 79-51 in Northern Sun women's basketball action Friday night in Duluth, Minn.

Booker scored a game-high 24 points for Duluth (13-7, 8-5 NSIC), while Lindsay Miller and Kelsy Hewitt each had 11 points, and Shelly Stempmer scored 10 points.

The Bulldogs, who led 39-17 at halftime, shot 44.8 percent from the field in the game. In the loss for the Huskies (8-12, 3-10 NSIC), Becca Friesleben scored 10 points, while Jamie Noonan added eight points.

FREEMAN (1-12) 9 16 23 28
BRIDGEWATER-EMERY (9-4) 10 26 38 52

Canistota 61, Marion 35

MARION — Sam Jolley recorded 23 points and eight rebounds to lead the Canistota Hawks past Marion 61-35 in the second round of the Cornbelt Conference Tournament on Friday night in Marion.

Jerico Shape added 10 points for Canistota (9-4), while Alex Robertson had nine points and four assists.

The Hawks led 30-21 at halftime and 41-27 after three quarters.

For the Bears (4-10), Seth Huges scored 10 points, and Braden Schmidt and Phil Luke each had seven points.

CANISTOTA (9-4) 22 30 41 61
MARION (4-10) 8 21 27 35

Other Games

Bon Homme 46, Avon 41

AVON — A balanced performance propelled the Bon Homme Cavaliers past Avon 46-41 on Friday night in Avon.

Michael Ruppelt scored 14 points to lead the Cavs (8-5), while Robbie Jelsma added 11 points and 11 rebounds. Ryan Heusinkveld scored nine points, while Lance Ranek had 11 points and two assists.

Bon Homme shot 46 percent (18-of-39) from the field and out-rebounded the Pirates 31-25.

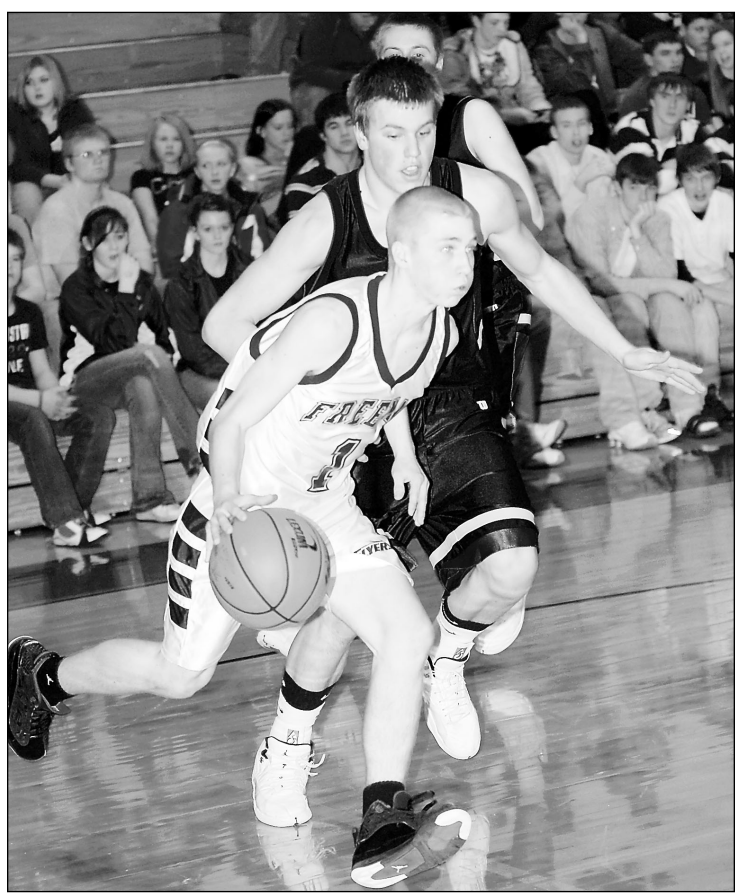
In the loss for Avon (7-7), Marshall Cihak had 16 points, nine rebounds and three assists, while Jeff Bertus and Josh Cihak each scored six points.

Next Tuesday, Bon Homme is at South Central in Bonesteel and Avon hosts Viborg.

BON HOMME (8-5) 12 22 35 46
AVON (7-7) 5 24 31 41

Centerville 58, Hurley 36

HURLEY — The Centerville Tornados defeated the Hurley Bulldogs 58-36 in boys basketball



Freeman's Trey Waltner (1) drives past Bridgewater-Emery defender Tyson Kayser during the first quarter of Friday night's game at the Cornbelt Conference Tournament in Marion.

action on Friday night.

The Tornados received a 21-point performance out of Jack Foley. Evan Voog added 12 points and pulled down seven rebounds.

Hurley's Dennis DeNueui score 20 points for the Bulldogs. Tyler Fischer posted eight rebounds.

CENTERVILLE (11-2) 18 32 45 58
HURLEY (11-2) 12 15 26 36

Beresford 76, Alcester-Hudson 41

BERESFORD — The Beresford Watchdogs scorched the nets for

71 percent shooting in the first half on the way to a 76-41 win over Alcester-Hudson on Friday night in Beresford.

Jordan Powell scored 19 points to lead the Watchdogs (8-6), who won their sixth straight game. Holden Cotton and Kyle McKelvey each added 16 points and Chris Mohr had five steals.

Beresford was 20-of-28 from the field in the first half and led 47-15 at intermission.

In the loss for the Cubs (4-11), Eric Anderson scored 15 points.

Baltic 82, Irene-Wakonda 62

BALTIC — Baltic defeated the Irene-Wakonda Eagles 82-62 on Friday night in Baltic.

Baltic had three players in double figures. Brendan Tidemann led all scorers with 24 points, nine rebounds, and five steals.

Jonny Goldammer nearly posted a double-double with 17 points and nine assists. Ethan Johnson added 15 points and five assists.

In the loss for Irene-Wakonda, Sam Kiger led the Eagles with 17 points. Ethan Kiger added 12 points while Justin Polley scored 10 points.

Baltic travels to Howard on Monday night.

Elkton-Lake Benton 69, Great Plains Lutheran 46

ELKTON — Elkton-Lake Benton defeated Great Plains Lutheran 69-46 in boys basketball action on Friday night.

Zach Trautman scored 22 points while adding six rebounds and four steals for ELB (11-3).

Great Plains Lutheran's Dustin Meseberg scored 24 points while adding four steals. Nick Lindwurm scored 10 points with four rebounds.

GREAT PLAINS LUTHERAN (3-12) 5 17 29 46
ELKTON-LAKE BENTON (11-3) 21 36 51 69

Norfolk 66, Fremont 60

NORFOLK, Neb. — The Norfolk Panthers defeated the Fremont Tigers 66-60 in Nebraska action on Friday night.

Norfolk's Brady Lollman scored 20 points to lead the Panthers. Nathan Marsh added 15 points and eight rebounds.

The Panthers also received a

strong contribution from Jalen Bradley who scored 14 points and dished out three assists.

Connor Niehaus scored 22 points to lead the Tigers. Alex Hamilton scored 15 points.

FREMONT 17 25 42 60
NORFOLK (10-1) 16 31 48 66

Brookings 56, Pierre 43

PIERRE — Landon Busch and Ryan McCutcher each scored 17 points as the Brookings Bobcats beat Pierre 56-43 in Class AA boys' action Friday night in Pierre.

Matt Crawford and Tanner Odegaard each added six points for the Bobcats (6-8), who led 32-20 at halftime.

For the Governors (2-10), who have lost six straight, Scott Cichos scored 18 points.

Pierre hosts Sioux Falls Washington today (Saturday) and Brookings is at Mitchell next Tuesday.

BROOKINGS (6-8) 18 32 44 56
PIERRE (2-10) 15 20 31 53

Thursday's Games

Ponca 47, Osmond 41

WINSIDE, Neb. — Led by Matt Dohma's 15 points, the Ponca Indians beat Osmond 47-41 in the second round of the Lewis and Clark Conference Tournament on Thursday night in Winside, Neb.

Ben Gehring added nine points for Ponca (11-6), while Andrew Watchorn scored eight points.

The Indians led 19-16 at halftime and 30-29 after three quarters.

In the loss for Osmond (10-6), Chris Schmit had 18 points and four rebounds, while Gene Kumm added six points and Bryce Johnson grabbed nine rebounds.

Osmond hosts Newcastle next Tuesday, while Ponca hosts Homer next Friday.

PONCA (11-6) 12 19 30 47
OSMOND (10-6) 9 16 29 41

MOMS, DON'T WORRY. IF THOSE CHEST PAINS ARE JUST INDIGESTION, EVERYONE WILL BE GLAD TO EAT OUT LATER.

No matter how busy you are taking care of your family, don't ever ignore the signs of a heart attack. Drop everything, dial 911 and go straight to the Avera Sacred Heart emergency department. Women experience different symptoms than men. Visit Minervas during February to learn more, see the Avera Sacred Heart display and register for prizes. No purchase necessary.

KAR'S TV & AUDIO APPLIANCES
Avera Sacred Heart Hospital
Minerva Convention Center Box Museum Kelly Inn