

Gazelles Set For State Gymnastics

Championships Begin Friday In Rapid City

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK
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For the past few years, Yankton-Bon Homme gymnastics coach Luke Youmans has said the Gazelles were ready to turn the corner as a program.

This year it appears that the corner has been turned and the program is ready to be more competitive on the state's biggest stage.

The Gazelles head to the South Dakota State Gymnastics Championships, which begin Friday in Rapid City, with confidence that this will be the year the squad returns to the top-eight for the first time in several years.

"This, for us, was a year of positive change," Youmans said. "We've

moved in the right direction. We don't want to get too hung up on scores, but scores are what decides who gets on the podium. We've steadily increased our scores and raised our level of expectations."

The Gazelles finished sixth in the Eastern South Dakota Conference, but were just a point out of third.

"There are a lot of teams that are equally-matched," Youmans said. "It was good to have that heads-up at ESD, that a matter of one person falling or one person staying up and third through seventh could be reshuffled."

Part of what has helped the Gazelles improve from Class AA's lower tier to being competitive for a top-eight award at state is the team's depth.

"Our depth is what has helped us, especially when you look at the all-around. We have five girls who could score 33.0 or better in the all-around," Youmans said. "Even further, on most events we have seven girls that are varsity-level gymnasts. That has certainly helped us over the course of the year."

With teams only able to compete five gymnasts per event, being seven gymnasts deep in each event has meant there is competition within the team to be on the tournament roster.

"That has made us work harder," Youmans said. "It's been good to have some friendly competition within the team."

While the Gazelles' focus is on Friday's team competition, their depth will also show in Saturday's individual competition. Charlotte Taggart, Elsie Kotalik and Ashtyn Haak each

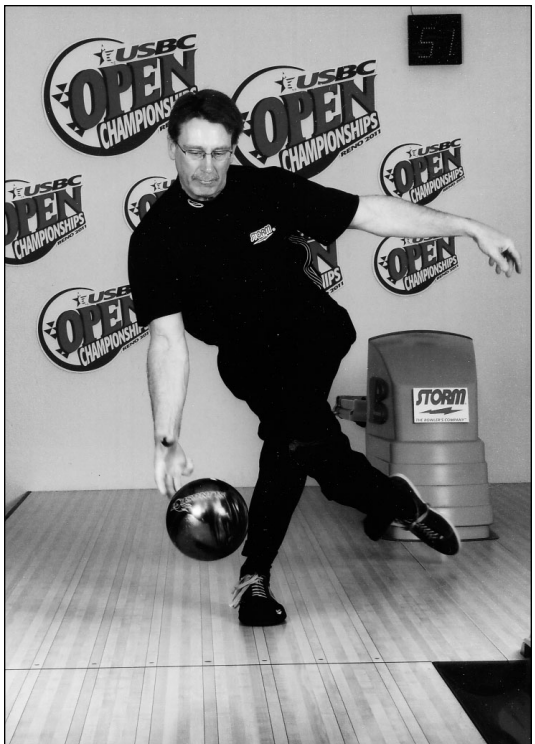
qualified for the all-around competition. They will be joined by Kaitlin Guthmiller on the balance beam and vault, Haleigh Diede and Chelsey Hisek on the uneven parallel bars and Sophie Bisgard on the floor exercise.

"Our focus is definitely on team day, but we have a chance to have some fun on Saturday, and put some individuals in the top 20," Youmans said. "We have an opportunity on Saturday to do something special. Medals for our gymnasts have been few and far between, and there are great opportunities for our gymnasts to place in those events."

"We have three in the all-around, and they could all be in the top 20 if they have good days."

Team competition will begin at

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SUBMITTED PHOTO

Yankton bowler Randy Svendsen recently made Yankton Bowl history by recording back-to-back 300 games during an event. He was the fourth bowler in South Dakota history to accomplish that feat.

Morningside Stuffs MMC

No. 4 Mustangs Avenge Loss To Lancers, Lock Up GPAC Title

BY EMILY NIEBRUGGE
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The Mount Marty women's basketball players knew they were going to play a tough game Wednesday night.

That's exactly what happened as they faced the No. 4 Morningside Mustangs, who claimed a 65-54 victory — as well as the Great Plains Athletic Conference regular-season championship and berth into the NAIA Division II national tournament — against the Lancers at Laddie E. Cimpl Arena.

"Sometimes things don't look as good when you play a really good team, and they're a really good basketball team," MMC head coach Tom Schlimgen said. "They're leading our conference for a reason. They've got a lot to play for — a conference championship and they'll probably have a top seed in our bracket."

MMC held the lead once in the game, up 2-0 right away, but after the Mustangs went on two 6-0 runs early in the game, the Lancers found themselves behind 19-7. MMC did manage to catch up with the Mustangs, still ahead 26-22 with six minutes left in the first half, but ended up trailing Morningside 36-24 at the half.

Mount Marty shot at just 28 percent for the first half, against Morningside's 60 percent.

"Once you get in the half-court game with the way (Morningside) spreads the floor, they're a hard team to guard," Schlimgen said. "We didn't shoot well and we didn't execute as well. So much of it was one-on-one play where we were sloppy with the basketball. We probably could have tied the game, but we just gave them way too many offensive boards."

Although the Lancers came out more aggressive during the second half, the Mustangs were able to jump ahead 43-26 less than four minutes into the second



JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

Mount Marty's Alyssa Whetham, right, drives past Morningside's Shelby Beaudette during their Great Plains Athletic Conference women's basketball game on Wednesday at Laddie E. Cimpl Arena.

Midland Women Upend No. 9 Briar Cliff

FREMONT, Neb. — Midland used 15 points and 20 rebounds from Jami Thrasher to upset No. 9 Briar Cliff 65-61 in Great Plains Athletic Conference women's basketball action on Wednesday.

Darien Moon had 12 points and seven rebounds off the bench for Midland (12-17, 6-13 GPAC), which won despite committing 33 turnovers. Jamilah Johnson

and Joelle Andersen each had 10 points in the victory.

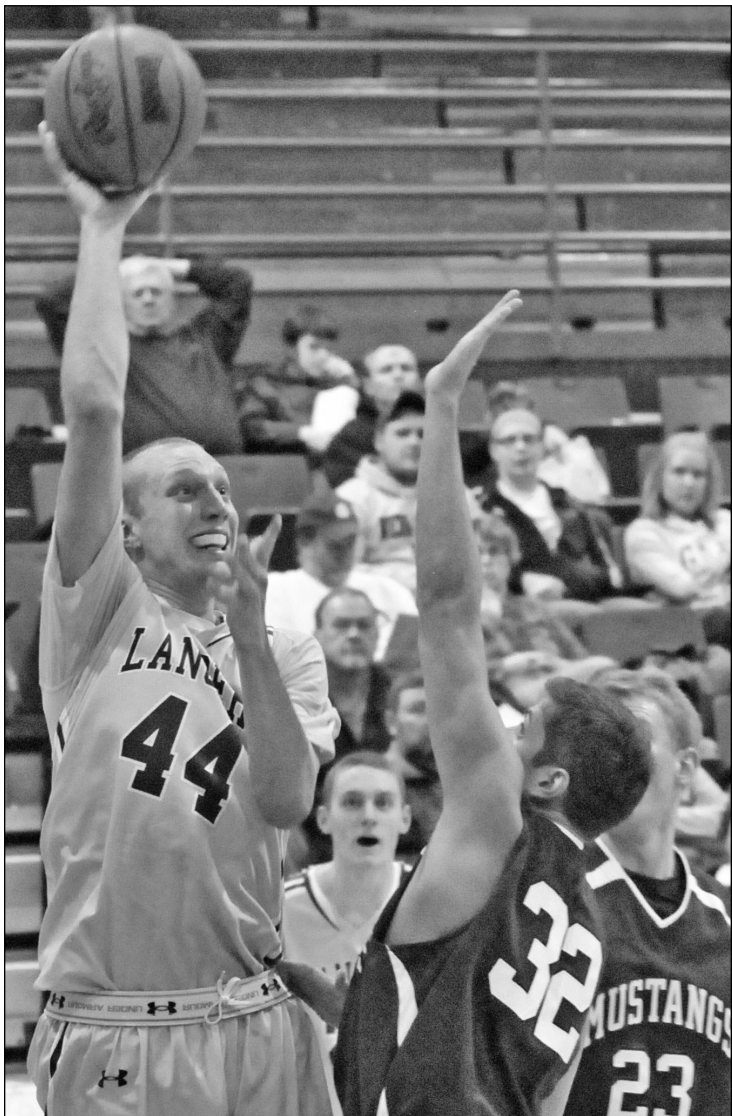
Slone Masters led Briar Cliff (22-7, 13-6 GPAC) with 17 points and seven rebounds off the bench. Kelsey Evans scored 14 points. Regan Cooper and 11 points and eight rebounds. Sara Reeves finished with 10 points. Avon native Kela Cihak had five points and seven steals, and Crofton, Neb., native Jordan Sanger

had two points off the bench for the Chargers.

NO. 10 NORTHWESTERN 87, DAKOTA WESLEYAN 81: MITCHELL — Kendra De Jong posted 30 points and 19 rebounds to lead 10th-ranked Northwestern to an 87-81 victory over Dakota Wesleyan in Great Plains Athletic Conference women's basketball action on Wednesday at the Corn Palace.

Mackenzie Small scored 17 points for Northwestern (20-6, 14-5 GPAC), which trailed 40-39 at the half. Karen Hutson and Samantha Kleinasser each had 16 points in the victory.

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JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

Mount Marty's Chevy Fischer shoots over the top of Morningside's Tyler Johnson during the first half of their Great Plains Athletic Conference men's basketball game on Wednesday at Laddie E. Cimpl Arena.

Mustangs Hold Off MMC

BY KEITH A. BROCKBERG
P&D Correspondent

The Mount Marty Lancers shot nearly 60-percent from the field, but it was not enough to overcome Danny Rudeen and the Morningside Mustangs.

Rudeen, the Great Plains Athletic Conference's top scorer with nearly 20 points a night, scored 31 points to lead the Mustangs to an 87-77 win over the Lancers at Laddie E. Cimpl Arena Wednesday night.

The Mustangs and their 4-guard lineup started quickly, hitting on their first four shots from downtown, including duplicate makes by Tanner Ferguson and Tanner Miller in the first 37 seconds for a quick 6-0 visiting lead.

Mount Marty regrouped behind seniors Joe Hieb and Jeff Larsen and settled into the action.

Hieb drove for a pair of baskets and Larsen scored the first of his four first-half buckets to pull the Lancers to within 7-6.

With Rudeen laying low at the outset, the Mustangs began to work inside to center Kyle Nikkel.

The 6-6 freshman backed in for a pair of baskets and dished to Rudeen for a lay-up that kept the Mustangs in front 26-18.

From there, Rudeen took over.

The junior guard from Sioux City scored 16 points in the final five minutes of the first half, pushing Morningside's lead from 30-23 to 46-33 at the break.

Rudeen's burst and his 18 points had him nearly at his per-game average at the half.

The Lancers found their first-half offense in the middle with the hard-working Larsen, who had 11 points at the break.

The Lancers shot 58.3-percent from the field in the half, but Morningside pumped off 13 more shots due in part to nine Mount

Marty turnovers and 15 Mustang rebounds on the offensive end.

"We maintained our shooting in the first half — we shot 58-percent," said Mount Marty head coach Jim Thorson. "It's hard to keep up when they get so many more shots; the offensive rebounds really made it tough on us."

Mount Marty's turnover issues continued at the second half's outset and things looked dire as Morningside's lead grew to 52-35 after a steal and lay-in from Tanner Miller.

However, the Lancers got a trey from Tyler Payer and quickly climbed back.

Hieb worked in the paint for a pair of baskets and Saladin Smith ran down an errant pass and rose to the rack for a lay-up that trimmed the Mustang lead to 54-48.

Mount Marty closed to within 59-58 as Hieb cued up for a 3-pointer with 9:54 remaining.

The Mustangs responded to the Lancer run and a timeout from head coach Jim Sykes with a 9-0 run capped by a dish inside from Trent Miller to Ryan Strand. Rudeen added two more baskets during the run as Morningside suddenly held a 68-58 lead.

Payer's long-range shooting kept the Lancer hopes alive.

A pair of treys from the 6-4 sophomore from Armour pulled Mount Marty to within 78-71 with 2:31 remaining.

A spinning bucket from Hieb cut Morningside's lead to 79-74 with a minute to play, but the Lancer charge was finished and the Mustangs notched the 87-77 win, their 10th in conference play.

"We didn't fade away, but we just didn't get the execution we needed there at the end to get the win," Thorson said. "I really

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Yankton's Svendsen Twice As Perfect

BY NICK ROBINSON
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Yankton native and bowling enthusiast Randy Svendsen has been in a bowling alley as long as he can remember.

Svendsen accomplished a feat only three bowlers in the state of South Dakota can say they have done — bowled two straight 300 games.

Svendsen "got hooked" as he says, at age six. His grandmother worked at the lanes, and his parents were eager league bowlers.

"I was hanging out there, and at some point I finally got started," Svendsen said. "Once I started, I couldn't get enough and have been doing it ever since."

At age 13, Svendsen got his first taste of league bowling when a friend asked him to join.

Years went by, and his love and passion for bowling grew stronger. With all the time on the lanes, he was becoming a great bowler.

At age 16, Svendsen was the first youth to roll a 700 series in Yankton.

At 23, he was the youngest (at the time) to roll a 300 game in the Yankton Adult League.

According to Svendsen, his prized possession so far is being inducted into the South Dakota Bowling Hall of Fame in 2006.

"It's quite an honor (to be in the Hall of Fame)," he said. "It feels rewarding to stand beside friends who have achieved as high of marks."

This past December, Svendsen was coming home on a gloomy and bitter-cold day from Iowa.

"I had the mindset that I wasn't going to bowl," Svendsen said. "But later, when I got home, I had nothing else to do. So, I went out and did it to get some practice, and it was a good time to keep sharp."

Little did he know, after those two games he would be inked into the record books.

"I bowled my first game and I had no mindset at all, I really didn't think about bowling another 300 game," he said. "I told my wife 'I'd make a calculated guess for this game and switch balls.'"

As Svendsen says, good players change balls after their games for judgment calls on condition.

As his second game was wrapping up, the pressure was cracking down. Svendsen fired his last ball out of his hand, aiming the ball at his target.

"I threw that last ball and saw that it had a shot," he said. "I got on my knees and hoped that they'd all go in. As I saw them all fall down, the shock and excitement hit me. I had that moment where I couldn't believe that just happened."

The only two people other than him to bowl back-to-back 300 games were, in fact, the members on his national tournament team. One of the bowlers, Barington, is actually a cousin of Svendsen.

"After I was done, I talked to my teammates," he said. "Marty (Barington) said 'what are the odds of people being related doing this?' and Ted (Staikoff) said 'isn't it amazing to think it's possible for us to throw 24 strikes in-a-row?'"

Those two games alone have helped Svendsen's confidence tremendously over the past few months.

In mid-March, Svendsen and his team will head back to Reno to take another crack at a top-10 performance in the nation.

Last year, his team placed 90th at the national tournament in Reno, Nev. The members of his team are Marty Barington of Mitchell and Ted Staikoff of Rapid City.

"Ninety doesn't sound like a lot, until you pull out the fact that there were 12,000 teams in the tournament," he said. "When we left, we were sitting in ninth place. To this day, I am still very pleased about that performance."

The national tournament runs for eight months. When Svendsen's team left, around three months remaining in the tournament, greater competition came in and forced Svendsen and his squad back in the rankings.

In 2014, he will be honored for competing in 25 national tournaments.

"Meeting and seeing some of the greatest bowlers in the world is what sticks out the most to me about those 25 years," he said.

Approximately a month later, the crew will head to Huron to partake in the South Dakota State Tournament.

Svendsen said he holds a bit of superstition before any key game or tournament.

"Before I get on the wood, I have a mindset of Dick Weber placed in my head," he said. "I imagine him making shots and his wind-up. It helps me get into the game a little bit."

He even admits that at one point, he carried a photo of Weber in his wallet.

Weber is known in the bowling world as a pioneer and one of the best to compete. Weber is also a founding member of the Professional Bowling Association.

Svendsen also said bowling has helped shape the person he is today.

"It's helped me deal with adversity, and I've car-

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