

Mercy Rule Keeping Games From Getting Out Of Hand

BY BRUCE VIERGUTZ
P&D Correspondent

Just because the Crofton girls basketball team drills you like a dentist facing a mouthful of cavities, that doesn't mean the Warriors don't have a little compassion in doing it.

Thanks to the new mercy rule instituted by the Nebraska School of Activities Association, the Warriors have no choice in letting up on the gas sometimes.

The rule, in general, states that when a team leads by 40 points in the second half, the rule takes affect. That means the clock continues to run unless a team calls a time out or a player is injured.

Even if a team cuts into the 40-point lead, the rule stays in affect.

Crofton head coach Aaron Losing

said the National Federation of High School Sports has encouraged states to adopt it.

"I think it's a good rule," said Losing. "When a team gets down by that far, it really does help to control the game and things don't get completely out of hand."

The rule helps avoid scores of 120-4 and wipeouts like that.

Crofton, out to a zinging 16-1 start heading into the Mid-State Conference basketball tournament this week, has had a few lopsided scores to deal with this year.

The Warriors have pummeled Creighton (73-37), O'Neill (79-15), Battle Creek (67-25), Atkinson West Holt (63-17) and Lutheran High Northeast 81-7.

Crofton won at Vermillion, S.D., 83-37 but South Dakota does not have the mercy rule.

"The rule has been good for us," said Losing. "It's forced us to get our younger players in the game a lot sooner. The kids on our bench have gotten more playing time because of the rule."

Of course, one drawback to the rule is that the starters get pulled a lot earlier and may not get as much playing time as in the past.

That worries coaches on how their team react in a competitive contest where they may have to play the entire game.

The Warriors, the Class C2 returning state champions, are competing in the Mid-State Conference for the second year in a row. They opened the tournament with a win over Battle Creek and will face Pierce, the defending C1 state champs in the semifinals.

Pierce and Crofton hooked up in a regular season match-up last Thurs-

day at Pierce.

Most expected a barn-burner of a game but the Warriors shell-shocked the Bluejays 70-39.

"Pierce is a really good team," said Losing. "We just played extremely well that night."

Allison Arens singed the nets for 24 points and drained 8 of the Warriors 13, 3-point baskets.

"We've been shooting the ball extremely well the last month and a half," said Losing. "We also were able to do some things with our defense and create some turnovers. We also rebounded the ball well."

Losing said the Warriors have tweaked their offense and defense this year to help play to the team's strengths.

"It forces us to use our depth and our speed more," said Losing. "We like to create turnovers and we're

probably shooting the ball a lot more from the outside this year. We haven't had a lot of 3-point shooters in the past, but we've shot a lot more of them this year, that's for sure."

Crofton could have the opportunity to avenge its only loss this season should it meet Guardian Angels Central Catholic of West Point in the Mid-State finals.

The Bluejays beat Crofton 59-53 back on Dec.14 in West Point.

"We play in a conference where you have to be ready to go every night or you could lose," said Losing. "Our goal is to make it to the championship round and hope for the best."

Possibly after Monday's game with Battle Creek the Warriors won't have to bother with the new mercy rule. But Crofton wouldn't mind using it if it had to.

Commentary | Recruiting

USD, SDSU Focus On Winning State

BY JEREMY HOECK
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A common phrase in the world of college athletics recruiting is 'keep them in state.' In other words, if at all possible, keep talented players within the borders.



Jeremy
HOECK

South Dakota State and the University of South Dakota, the two NCAA Division I schools in a sparsely-populated state, have found ways to combat issues associated with scholarships, walk-on offers and the allure of other regional programs.

The Coyotes, for one, have used the pride factor.

"You see a lot of tough kids that want to play for their home state," said head coach Joe Glenn, whose program will unveil its 2014 recruiting class on Wednesday as part of National Signing Day.

"I know, when I was here, that was really important to those guys; made them play even harder, like they had something to prove."

For Shay Bratland, one of those in-state players who will sign with USD on Wednesday, location didn't necessarily matter at first. Eventually, though, the running back from Watertown, understand the in-state theme.

"Honestly, when I first started getting recruited, I didn't have a sense of where I wanted to go, it was just whatever place fit me the best," Bratland said. "It was pretty broad."

"But once I made a decision, I realized it was pretty big to stay close."

And judging by the projected recruits for both USD and SDSU, there will be another steady stream of South Dakota names mixed in with the traditionally regional-heavy classes.

The unofficial pre-signing day count includes six South Dakota recruits for the Coyotes: Bratland, Nick Jensen (OL, Vermillion), Kray Krokowski (DE, Winner), Spencer Hopkins (OLB, Sioux Falls O'Gorman), Justin Harkless (QB, Hot Springs) and Chase Glazier (QB, Custer). More could commit before Wednesday.

South Dakota State will likely have a handful more, including J.J. Hejna of Yankton.



A year ago, USD signed two in-state recruits, while SDSU announced eight such recruits (including walk-ons), but between the programs, there were a total of 38 South Dakota natives on the 2013 rosters — 27 for SDSU.

As one of USD's earliest verbal commitments for the 2014 class, Bratland said he was in a position to recruit other players.

"I think maybe I swayed a couple of guys," he joked.

Many athletes like Bratland have other the years cited the D-I level as a major attraction in recruiting, and so, in that way there doesn't need to be much prodding. The only persuasions would come in keeping a certain athlete away from the rival school.

"I would much rather not see them go up to up north," Vermillion head coach Andy Homan joked, referring to South Dakota State.

"But it's great to see both program keeping athletes from leaving South Dakota," he added. "Both programs have rich traditions that they are either trying to rebuild or keep going."

Though the numbers of in-state recruits will always fluctuate between USD and SDSU, this year's classes — particularly by the Coyotes — would seem to indicate increased attention paid toward South Dakota talent.

"It's always nice to see in-state kids get a chance to



play for our local colleges," Custer head coach Russ Bailey said. "The level of talent that is coming out of South Dakota high schools have always been impressive, but now it seems that it is being recognized more and these kids are going on to successful college careers."

For example, such South Dakota natives as Chase Douglas (Brandon), Trevor Greger (Wagner) and Austin Sumner (Brandon) have played key roles in SDSU reaching the FCS playoffs in two straight years.

And in Vermillion, names like Drew Iddings (Rapid City) and Keyen Lage (Sioux Falls) have been defensive

staples in their first two seasons.

Developing coaches is key to producing college-ready players at the high school level, Glenn said. He specifically referenced schools that have "full staffs," as well as the number of coaches who attended the South Dakota High School Football Coaches Association clinic.

"It just makes a lot of sense for all of us to get some South Dakota boys," Glenn said.

While a program like SDSU can 'sell' a high school athlete on the recent success, USD has had to use its progression and potential as a major attraction. The Coy-

South Dakota natives Nick Jensen of Vermillion (top photo, #50) and Shay Bratland (bottom photo, carrying ball) are among the South Dakota natives who have verbally committed to attending the University of South Dakota. USD has six in-state recruits who have verbally committed for football.

South Dakota State has several as well, including Yankton's J.J. Hejna, as both of the state's NCAA Division I football programs are working to get the state's top recruits.

TOP PHOTO BY DAVID LIAS/VERMILLION PLAIN TALK

BOTTOM PHOTO BY JEREMY HOECK/P&D

just caps it off right now there."

USD's Projected Haul

The Coyotes needed some immediate help in the secondary after graduating both starting cornerbacks (Dyllan Knox, Jarrid Bryant) and both safeties (Aaron Swift, Devin Taverna) from last season.

And so, USD went out and recruited two transfers that figure to see significant playing time in 2014 — Chris Tyler (CB, Iowa Western CC) and Michael Lilly (CB, Santa Ana College, Calif.)

Another such area that needed attention that Glenn referred to was special teams. USD also nabbed a transfer in Eric Shufford, a wide receiver and kick returner from San Bernardino Valley College (Calif.).

Though he was not able to comment on specific recruits until they sign, Glenn said Wednesday's full list should be somewhere between 25-30 kids.

"The only thing is, you don't get them all. You're not going to beat everybody," said Glenn, who referenced North Dakota State. "At the same time, we cast our net far and wide enough to get some good athletes."

You can follow Jeremy Hoeck on Twitter at twitter.com/jhoeck. Discuss this story at www.yankton.net.

Wausa Boys Win In L&C Tourney Opener

WAUSA, Neb. — The Wausa Vikings beat the Allen Eagles 66-18 in boys' basketball Lewis and Clark Conference tournament Monday.

In the win for the Vikings, Austin Conn led the team with 18 points and four steals. Spencer Rosberg scored 12 points.

For the Eagles, Myles Flores scored nine points.

Next, Wausa will play in the quarter finals against Walthill, and Allen will play Hartington in a consolation game Thursday.

ALLEN (1-17) 4 9 12 18
WALTHILL (14-3) 20 31 52 66

Walthill 55, Hartington 51

WALTHILL, Neb. — The Walthill Bluejays beat the Hartington Wildcats 55-51 in the first round of the boys' basketball Lewis and Clark Conference Tournament Monday.

In the win for the Bluejays, Kobe Smith led the team with 20 points, and Jayden Shenden and Orion LaMotte scored nine points respectively.

For the Wildcats, Kolby Jueden scored 19 points, Riley Haug scored 10 points and Derek Jueden scored eight points.

Next, Walthill will play Wausa in the quarterfinal game and Hartington will play Allen in the consolation game Thursday.

WALTHILL (8-7) 13 28 38 55

HARTINGTON (9-8) 10 26 33 12

Winnipeg 52, Laurel-Concord-Coleridge 36

WINNEPEG, Neb. — Winnipeg used a 25-2 edge in the third quarter to pull away to a 52-36 victory over Laurel-Concord-Coleridge in the opening round of the Lewis & Clark Conference boys' basketball tournament on Monday in Winnipeg, Neb.

David Wingett scored 14 points for the Winnipeg Indians (17-3), while Isaiah Medina netted 12 points and Jeremy Merrick contributed 10 for the victory.

The Bears' Jordan Jansen scored eight points to lead the way. Calvin Casey contributed five points and five rebounds.

Both teams will continue to play in the Lewis & Clark Conference. Winnipeg (17-3) will move on to the second round to face off against Bloomfield on Thursday night in Winnipeg. Laurel-Concord-Coleridge (3-14) will play in consolation action on Thursday.

WINNEPEG (17-3) 11 24 49 52
LAUREL-CONCORD-COLERIDGE (3-14) 3 16 18 36

Other Games

Bon Homme 65, Corsica-Stickney 51

TYNDALL — The Bon Homme Cavaliers beat the Corsica-Stickney Comets 65-51 in boys' basketball action Monday.

In the win for the Cavaliers, Scott Van Winkle led the team with 18 points and four assists. Jon Barrett scored 17

points with 11 rebounds and Scott Wieseler scored 13 points.

For the Comets, Brian Joachim scored 12 points. Walker Baan Hoffman grabbed nine rebounds with five assists.

Next, Corsica-Stickney will play Sanborn Central Woonsocket Thursday and Bon Homme will play at Avon Friday.

In junior varsity, Bon Homme beat Corsica-Stickney 30-29.

CORSICA-STICKNEY (8-6) 12 28 40 51
BON HOMME (9-5) 20 32 50 65

Avon 54, Menno 44

AVON — Avon used a 30-17 edge in the middle periods to take control in a 54-44 victory over Menno in boys' basketball action on Monday.

The Pirates' Brandon Koomich contributed 20 points to lead the way. Devin Talsma netted 14 points with six assists, while Logan Mudder tallied up 10 points, six rebounds and three assists.

Kaleb Preszler for the Menno Wolves (4-10) netted 18 points to lead the way. Derek Lehr contributed 17 points and five assists.

Avon (5-8) will play Bon Homme on Friday in Avon. Menno will face off against Mitchell Christian on Saturday in Mitchell.

Avon won the JV game 47-28.

AVON (5-8) 13 22 43 54
MENNO (4-10) 17 21 34 44

Freeman 67, Scotland 52

SCOTLAND — Cole Paulson scored a game-high 29 points to lead Freeman to a 67-52 victory over Scotland in boys' basketball action on Monday.

Brennan Schmidt had 15 points and 10 rebounds for Freeman. Joe Weier netted 12 points. Paulson also had seven rebounds for the Flyers, who outscored the Highlanders 20-8 in the second quarter to pull away.

Tanner Skorepa led Scotland with 14 points and seven rebounds. Shaye Bloch had 10 points.

Freeman hosts Howard on Friday. Scotland travels to Ethan on Thursday.

FREEMAN 15 35 48 67
SCOTLAND 11 19 32 52

Elkton-Lk Benton 77, Baltic 25

ELKTON — Elkton-Lake Benton beat the Baltic Bulldogs 77-25 in boys' basketball action Monday.

In the win for Elkton, Nathan Krog led the team with 19 points and 11 rebounds. Trevan Farnham scored 15 points with seven rebounds. Nick Krog had four steals and six assists.

For Baltic, Kyler Johnson scored eight points and Andrew Mork grabbed four rebounds.

Next, Elkton will play at Flandreau Indian and Baltic will play at Garrettsville Tuesday.

BALTIC (2-10) 13 19 20 25
ELKTON-LAKE BENTON (12-4) 22 38 67 77

Girls

Bon Homme 55, Gregory 36

GREGORY — The Bon Homme Cavaliers beat the Gregory Gorrilas in girls' basketball Monday.

In the win for the Cavaliers, Sierra Mesman led the

Gymnastics: Tanagers Win Home Triangular

VERMILLION — The Vermillion Tanagers beat out Wagner and West Central for top honors in a gymnastics triangular on Monday at Vermillion High School.

Led by all-around champion Carter Williams' 33.95, Vermillion posted a team score of 129.45. Wagner scored a 126.35, led by Hannah Fleming's runner-up finish in the all-around (33.7). West Central scored a 114.4, led by Alyssa Anderson's third place finish in the all-around (33.35). Anderson won both the uneven parallel bars (8.35) and the vault (8.85). Williams won on the balance beam (8.7). Fleming scored a 9.0 to win the floor exercise.

TEAM SCORES: Vermillion 129.45, Wagner 126.35, West Central 114.4
ALL-AROUND: Carter Williams V 33.95, Hannah Fleming W 33.7, Alyssa Anderson WC 33.35, Anneliese Taggart V 32.65, Anna Hammond V 31.15, Cheyenne Mallory V 31.15

BAR: Alyssa Anderson WC 8.35, Hannah Fleming W 8.2, Anneliese Taggart V 8.0, Carter Williams V 7.8, Cheyenne Mallory V 7.25, Megan Kocer W 7.15

BEAM: Carter Williams V 8.7, Hannah Fleming W 7.95, Krista Dvorak W 7.9, Anna Hammond V 7.8, Anneliese Taggart V 7.65, Alyssa Anderson WC 7.55

FLOOR: Hannah Fleming W 9.0, Carter Williams V 8.8, Cheyenne Mallory V 8.75, Alyssa Anderson WC 8.6, Megan Kocer W 8.55, Anneliese Taggart V 8.5

VAULT: Alyssa Anderson WC 8.85, Rachel Dion W 8.75, Cheyenne Mallory V 8.65, Carter Williams V 8.65, Hannah Fleming W 8.55, Anna Hammond V 8.55