

Press&Dakotan DAILY DOSE

Daily opinions from the P&D Sports Staff on local and national high school, college and pro sports.



BY JEREMY HOECK
jeremy.hoeck@yankton.net

Yankton was once again the site of a University of South Dakota athletic department function on Wednesday night at Minervas. It wasn't so much that the Coyote football program discussed its 2014 recruiting class to a capacity banquet room crowd that drew perhaps the biggest news of the night. It was the announcement that Yankton is clearly making in-roads within Coyote circles. Hosting its second USD function in the last five months, Yankton is set to become one of four state-wide chapters for the Howling Pack — USD's support organization. Details are still being ironed out (and are set to be announced sometime soon), but the crux of the reorganization would put Yankton's Jeremy Kudera as the point person for an official chapter. The other three starting points would be Vermillion, Sioux Falls and Rapid City. That news drew a nice applause from the crowd Wednesday night, as one would expect from a room full of red attire. It's not exactly a giant surprise, though, considering the Kuderas have been active in their support for such a chapter. Back in October, they hosted a similar gathering, in which athletic department officials and coaches spoke about ongoing support for the Coyotes. When I asked football coach Joe Glenn about such a chapter, he was gung-ho about bringing the Coyotes to Yankton. "If there's a fan base here, which you can see there is, let's go," Glenn said. "We need some red over here. We need to kick it in gear."

USD Continues To Branch Out In Yankton

The question of why a reorganization of the Howling Pack is being finalized is based primarily on geographic challenges, senior associate athletic director David Williams told the crowd. Rather than have a Howling Pack that some believe is centered in a city like Sioux Falls, the organization would allow "localization" — in other words, Kudera and his wife, Jennifer, could develop a formal Yankton-based support system. Yankton is a well-established hot spot for South Dakota State fans and alumni, but seeing our town becoming a hub for both Division I schools would, in my eyes, generate more Jackrabbit and Coyote interest from the average citizen. Plus, it would help intensify the rivalry. Not that it really needs it, right?

Morningside Sweeps MMC

SIoux CITY, Iowa — Morningside College earned its 20th victory of the season at the expense of Mount Marty College, beating the Lancers 78-46 in Great Plains Athletic Conference women's basketball action on Wednesday at Allee Gym.

Aslynn Muhl had 16 points and six rebounds, and Lexi Ackerman had 12 points for Morningside (20-5, 11-4 GPAC). Allison Bachman scored 10 points and Leann Osten had five assists and four steals in the victory.

For MMC, Logan Wagner led the way with 15 points and eight rebounds. Raquel Sutura had 12 points and nine rebounds. Cheyenne Lambly finished with a team-high four assists.

MMC, 10-15 and 2-14, hosts Hastings on Saturday as part of MMC's homecoming festivities. Start time is 2 p.m.

MEN — MORNINGSIDE 73, MMC 49: Danny Rudeen posted 16 points and seven rebounds to lead Morningside to a 73-49 victory over Mount Marty in GPAC men's basketball action on Wednesday.

Steve O'Neill had 14 points and Ryan Tegmeier netted 13 points for Morningside (17-8, 11-4 GPAC).

Bud Smith led MMC with 15 points and five assists. Chris Richardson netted 12 points. Patrick Ciganovic had eight points and nine rebounds for the Lancers.

MMC, 4-20 and 2-14, hosts Hastings on Saturday as part of MMC's homecoming festivities. Start time is at approximately 4 p.m.

Coyotes

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sometimes I forget about it," he said. "I'm still able to catch the ball and read the signs by coaches."

And no, there don't figure to be any obstacles at the next level because of those hand signals from coaches and other defensive players.

He's just anxious to help out a Coyote program that has improved from one win to four wins in coach Joe Glenn's first two seasons, Krolkowski said.

"When I followed what they were doing, I could just tell they're on that road," he said. "They might get to the playoffs, and that's definitely what I want to help them do."

Krolkowski, last season's Class 11B all-state defensive end, recorded 87 tackles and 14 sacks in his career for the Warriors. He said he had scholarship offers from other schools, but was ultimately swayed by his official visit to USD.

"I went through all those options, but USD seemed to just feel like home," Krolkowski said.

And that's exactly what drove Nick Jensen to sign with the Coyotes on Wednesday.

Jensen, a 6-foot-6 offensive line from Vermillion High School, said proximity "absolutely" played a role in his recruitment.

"That was definitely one of the things I thought about in this whole thing. That it would be fun to stay in town," said Jensen, the son and nephew of USD graduates.

"I have all my family and friends here, and now they can watch me some more."

As can the families of five other in-state recruits.

Jensen was one of four preferred walk-ons from in-



"It's literally a thing where we start at Old Main (on campus) and march out from there. You try and get everyone in your way."

JOE GLENN, USD HEAD FOOTBALL COACH

PHOTO BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

side the South Dakota borders, joining Chase Glazier (QB, Custer), Justin Harkless (QB, Hot Springs) and Spencer Hopkins (LB, Sioux Falls O'Gorman).

Winner's Krolkowski and Shay Bratland (RB, Watertown) were the only in-state scholarship athletes for the Coyotes.

On the recruiting process, Jensen said "it was pretty fun. I dragged my feet a little bit on making a decision, but the coaches were good about it. They kept in contact with me."

Sure, Jensen has the knowledge and desire to soak in Division I coaching, but perhaps his biggest strength is just that — size. In his career with the Tanagers, he recorded 112 tackles and four sacks.

"With his size, he'll be a great asset," Vermillion coach Andy Homan said. "He's got good feet for his big men, you can see that during basketball."

Also obvious from USD's recruiting class is a continued effort to stay close to Vermillion — head coach Joe

Glenn likened it to "1-day trip" for families to come watch their sons.

"It's literally a thing where we start at Old Main (on campus) and march out from there," Glenn said. "You try and get everyone in your way."

In addition to the six South Dakota recruits, USD got letters from six kids in Illinois, five in Iowa, and three each in Nebraska and California.

Among the signees for the Coyotes were three transfers who figure to make an imme-

diated impact.

- Three on the defensive side: Michael Lilly (CB, Santa Ana College), Mason Ruiz (DL, College of Sequoias) and Chris Tyler (CB, Iowa Western)

- One on offense: Eric "Munchie" Shufford (WR/KR, San Bernardino Valley College)

There were also a pair of brothers signed: Andrew Gray (Safety) and Alex Gray (DB/LB) from New Lenox, Ill.

A pair of teammates were also signed. Tacari Carpenter (WR) and Dylan Jiles (DB) from Richards High School in Oak Lawn, Ill., both signed, and the way Carpenter said it, USD's continued progression played a big role.

"They didn't have the best season, but I'm sure they will be coming up," Carpenter said. "They just want to win."

"They haven't had the best luck, but I'm sure the tables will turn quickly. I can see the future coming; something is going to happen there."

Carpenter did say USD's competitive schedule for 2014 also played a role in his decision. The Coyotes open at Oregon on Aug. 30, and will follow with non-conference games against Montana and Northern Arizona before the 8-game Missouri Valley schedule.

"Not many schools have that competitive schedule, but win or lose, they want the best," Carpenter said.

Jensen agreed, pointing to USD's number of close losses for 2013.

"Even with the guys they have now, we can all definitely help," Jensen said. "They had so many chances even last year to win more games, but they're going in the right direction."

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

Football

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Hejna was also a defensive leader for the Bucks, recording team-bests of 78 tackles and six interceptions. He also had 12 tackles for loss and a blocked kick. He finished with 13 career interceptions, third all-time on the Yankton all-time list.

"J.J. has a lot of talent. The biggest question will be where they play him. He was an all-state safety two years ago and an all-state receiver last year," said Yankton head coach Arlin Likness. "His leadership skills will carry over into the college ranks."

South Dakota State listed Hejna as a wide receiver in its release, but Hejna said they have not slotted him to a position just yet.

"Wherever they need me to go, that's where I'll end up," he said.

McKee joins another former Buck lineman, Terry Huber, at USF.

"Terry being up there, that was a big factor," McKee said of the sophomore offensive lineman for the Cougars. "Also, the coaching staff is super-nice. Their facilities are just breathtaking. They have a winning tradition up there."

Though McKee, at 6-1, is undersized as a defensive lineman, he more than pulled his weight for the Bucks, leading the team in both tackles for loss (21.5) and sacks (6.5). He also ranked second with 69 tackles.

"Steven was overlooked in all-state voting, but he'll have an opportunity to prove himself at the next level," Likness said. "He's strong, works hard in the weight room and is a leader on the line. He just gets after it."

At USF, McKee will likely get the chance to work against his former teammate.

"It will be nice," McKee said. "Except this time, hopefully, I'll give him a little more of a fight."

With just 12 seniors on the roster this past season, Likness is happy to see two of them get to continue playing football. Others could follow as well, he said.

"This was a fun group," he said. "Even though we didn't have the record we'd have liked, we had fun. These kids worked hard."

"Hopefully those dividends pay off at the next level."

Hejna plans to major in mathematics at SDSU, potentially with an eye towards teaching. McKee is undecided on a major.

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Runners

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was as much on the best academic fit as it was the best athletic fit.

"My parents and I discussed it, and we decided that the decision should be based on academics," he said. "USD has the med school, which is what I plan to do, it's close to home and it felt like the right fit."

"It certainly helps when the coach lives three blocks from us, too."

While Fitzsimmons has not been with the YHS program for six years, his imprint is still on the Yankton program. Dannenbring and Doug Haar, both longtime assistants under Fitzsimmons, remain with the program. Luke Youmans, assistant cross country and head track coach, was also with the program in the late years of Fitzsimmons' tenure.

"We still do most of the same things," Dannenbring said.

Cowman also has a seventh place finish in 2012 and a 19th place finish in 2011 to his credit.

Cowman had looked at several programs, many out of state, before settling on the closest NCAA Division I school.

"I had planned on going somewhere further away," he said. "But it became apparent to me that it would be helpful to be close to home, in case something came up."

A different sense of familiarity drew Larson to SDSU.

"It started when I went to a SDSU camp going into my junior year," she said. "I really enjoyed the team and the campus. I knew quite a few of the runners already there. Seeing runners that ran with me in high school having success up there is a bonus."

SDSU currently has two YHS alumni on the roster, Kipp Kinsley and Jenna Grossenburg, but have drawn a number former Bucks and Gazelles over the years.

Larson finished 17th at the state cross country meet

as an eighth grader, and ninth as a freshman and sophomore, but missed state her junior season due to a serious injury. She placed 47th at state this past fall.

Larson's resume also includes success as a middle-distance runner in track. She holds the fifth-fastest time ever by a Gazelle in the 800 (2:18.14) and the seventh-fastest time in the 400 (1:01.2).

Larson, who plans to major in graphic design, said the opportunity to run helped focus on her choice.

"In the beginning it was all over, with the calls and letters," she said. "Running definitely helped me narrow down my college decision."

Kruse, who finished tenth at state as a sophomore and second as a junior, wanted to go somewhere close to home and liked the feel of Augustana's smaller campus.

"It was a close school, and it's a private college, so it's smaller," she said. "I like the small atmosphere, and they have a history of success."

The Augustana women have finished in the top-15 in the nation each of the past eight seasons, including top-five in each of the past three. The Vikings were national champions in 2011 and runners-up in 2012 under 14-year head coach Tracy Hellman.

"It makes me feel like I can add to that," Kruse said. "I want to be on a good team, where we can all work hard together and succeed."

Kruse has also had success on the track, ranking in the top-10 for the Gazelles in both the 3200 (5th, 11:08.24) and 1600 (9th, 5:13.1).

While all three have one more track season in Yankton red and white remaining, Dannenbring expects big things out of all three at the collegiate level.

"These three have another big jump in improvement to make when they go on," he said.

You can follow James D. Cimburek on Twitter at twitter.com/JCimburek. Discuss this story at www.yankton.net



Three runners from Yankton have signed to compete at the collegiate level at different institutions.

TOP LEFT: Annie Kruse, front, will attend Augustana College.

TOP RIGHT: Whitlee Larson is headed to South Dakota State University.

BOTTOM: Brice Cowman, front, is headed to the University of South Dakota.

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