

# Upstart Huskers, Creighton Fuel Nebraska State Hoops Pride

BY ERIC OLSON  
AP Sports Writer

The state of Nebraska is basking in basketball glory.

The Creighton Bluejays (21-4, 11-2) lead the Big East, they're in line for their highest NCAA tournament seed, and Doug McDermott is the nation's leading scorer and a candidate for national player of the year.

The Nebraska Cornhuskers (14-10, 6-6) upset then-No. 9 Michigan State on the road Sunday for their fifth win in six games. That pushed them to .500 in the Big Ten and has them bidding to make the NCAA field for the first time since 1998.

Alas, the state might have two teams to cheer in the NCAA tournament for only the second time, and first since 1991.

Conditions are ripe for the hype. Creighton, in Omaha, left the mid-

major Missouri Valley for the reconstituted Big East this season and is fifth nationally in attendance at 17,766 fans a game.

Nebraska, in Lincoln, has capitalized on the opening of the Pinnacle Bank Arena and is 13th in attendance at 15,253.

No one could have imagined such excitement for basketball in a state of 1.8 million that develops little major-college talent. Neither Creighton nor Nebraska roster lists a scholarship player from the state.

College basketball enthusiast Dave Heineman, also the state's governor, is relishing the moment.

"This is some of the best basketball I've seen this state play at the collegiate level," Heineman said Monday in an interview with The Associated Press. He pointed out that in addition to the Creighton and Nebraska men's success, the

17th-ranked Huskers women's team also is excelling.

Heineman said he attends about five Nebraska men's games a season and about the same number of women's games. He said he also makes the 50-mile drive for Creighton games four or five times a year.

One of those occasions was Sunday, when he swapped his signature red polo for a blue one for the Bluejays' 101-80 win over then-No. 6 Villanova. That victory moved the Bluejays from No. 18 to a tie for No. 11 in this week's Top 25 poll.

As Creighton's game was about to tip off, Nebraska was finishing a 60-51 upset of the Spartans. It was the Huskers' first road win against a ranked opponent since 2008.

All this has created buzz about the possibility of second-year coach Tim Miles leading the Huskers to

the program's first winning conference record since 1998-99 and an NCAA bid.

Miles' advice for his players? "Basically, avoid the noise," he said. "None of it exists until it exists. What I mean by that, all we can control is winning games. So anything outside of that, looking beyond the finish line ... the finish line is how well we practice today. The finish line is how we prepare ourselves for Penn State. Nothing more, nothing less."

Creighton, which leads Villanova by a half-game in the Big East, plays at Marquette on Wednesday and is poised to land its highest NCAA seed, bettering the No. 6 it earned in 2003.

For Nebraska, which was picked last in the Big Ten, just getting into the NCAA tournament would exceed all expectations.

Heineman, who fell in love with college basketball when he was studying at West Point and Bobby Knight was Army's coach, said he logs onto his computer to check RPI rankings whenever he gets some down time. He was home for Presidents Day on Monday, and he was mulling the possibilities.

"It's fair to say the way Creighton is playing, they're going to be a No. 2 or 3 seed. I don't think there's any question about that," Heineman said.

"Nebraska continues to move up. I have to check their RPI. I think it's 52. They're getting close to being on the bubble. They have a real shot — something no one would have dreamed of early in the year."

NEBRASKA HOOPS | PAGE 9

## Football | NFL Scouting Combine

# Big Week Ahead For Starr

BY JEREMY HOECK  
jeremy.hoeck@yankton.net

He won't be wearing a suit or a tie, but Tyler Starr is nearing the biggest job interview of his life.

And rather than in front of a room full of people, the former University of South Dakota standout will be making his case in front of a national audience and in front of every NFL team.

Starr, last season's defensive player of the year in the Missouri Valley Football Conference, will head to Indianapolis later this week to compete in the NFL Scouting Combine — which runs Feb. 22-25.

"It's absolutely a job interview," Starr's agent Kyle Strongin said Monday. "It's huge for him. He went to school in Vermillion, which is tough for people to get to."

"Now, all 32 teams; every major decision maker will be there. It's a great opportunity for him."

Starr, a 6-foot-4, 249-pound linebacker prospect who left as USD's all-time leader in sacks (27) and forced fumbles (13), has started to generate buzz following an impressive performance at last month's East-West Shrine Game.

Receiving one of 335 invitations to the Scouting Combine, Starr has put himself in a position to potentially earn a call on draft day in May, his agent said.

"I think what he did at the shrine game really elevated his status," said Strongin, with 1 Degree Sports Management, LLC in Nashville, Tenn. "People are aware of what he did; that generated a little buzz for him."

"There's no doubt in my mind that on team he fits best in their scheme, Tyler's on their draft board."

That, of course, remains to be scene. According to a handful of mock draft sites,

## NFL Scouting Combine

**WHEN:** Feb. 22-25  
**WHERE:** Indianapolis, Ind.  
**HOW TO FOLLOW:** Will be televised by NFL Network, and results will be available on nfl.com/combine  
**STARR WATCH:** Tyler Starr is the No. 23-ranked OLB by NFL-draftscout.com and a projected seventh round selection.

though, Starr seems to be climbing the various boards.

In the latest NFL-DraftScout.com rankings, Starr is listed as the No. 23 outside linebacker — at 245 overall and a projected seventh round selection.

Those around him while at USD certainly know his capability, according to defensive coordinator Jason Petrino.

Petrino said Monday he recently took a call from a scout with the Miami Dolphins, and was asked what position best suits Starr — defensive end or linebacker? "I joked, 'He's whatever you want him to be,'" Petrino said. "He can do a lot of things."

After ranking among the nation's best with 14 sacks as a sophomore for the Coyotes in 2011, Starr was asked to move to outside linebacker prior to his junior season.

"He didn't blink. He said, 'Sure coach,'" Petrino said. "He accepted it and ran with it."

The idea behind the switch, Petrino said, was for Starr to be freed up to make more plays all across the field — rather than be primarily at the line of scrimmage.

Ultimately, though, for Starr to propel himself to the caliber of an NFL prospect, he had to put in the work, Petrino said.

"The bottom line is, any



South Dakota's Tyler Starr, 11, pressures Missouri State quarterback Kierra Harris during USD's 17-14 victory in the 2013 season. Starr will attend the NFL Combine, which begins on Saturday in Indianapolis, Ind.

STARR | PAGE 9

## Irene-Wakonda Downs Flyers In Double-OT

WAKONDA — The Irene-Wakonda Eagles outlasted Freeman, beating the Flyers 64-61 in double-overtime in boys' basketball action on Monday.

After Irene-Wakonda took a 32-24 lead into the half, Freeman outscored the Eagles 16-8 in the third quarter to tie the game at 40. The teams were tied at 51 after regulation, and at 59 after the first overtime.

Gabe King posted 22 points, seven rebounds and six blocked shots to lead Irene-Wakonda. Garrett Anderson finished with 13 points and four assists. Kevin Hinseth had 12 points and Justin Ostrem had five blocked shots in the victory.

For Freeman, Cole Paulson led the way with 22 points, 11 rebounds and five steals. Brennan Schmidt had 13 points and three blocked shots. Josh Roth had 11 points and Thomas Kaufman had four assists for the Flyers.

Irene-Wakonda, 7-11, hosts Bridgewater-Emery on Thursday in Wakonda. Freeman, 8-10,

travels to Avon on Friday. Irene-Wakonda won the JV game 43-42.

FREEMAN (8-10).....13 24 40 51 59 61  
IRENE-WAKONDA (7-11).....14 32 40 51 59 64

**Parker 54, Hanson 49**

ALEXANDRIA — The Parker Pheasants battled past Hanson 54-49 in boys' basketball action on Monday in Alexandria.

Zack O'Keefe led Parker in scoring with 12 points. Jake Anderson cashed in 11 points and grabbed 11 rebounds.

For Hanson, Jordat Marquardt tallied 13 points. Taylor Nichols tallied 12 points and snatched nine rebounds, and Jacob Parades added 10 points.

Parker won the JV game 46-35 in overtime.

Parker hosts Freeman next Thursday, and Hanson plays Corsica-Stickney at the Corn Palace this Thursday.

PARKER (14-4).....13 24 36 54  
HANSON (14-4).....14 21 33 49

**Marion 45, Freeman Academy 42**

MARION — Jacob Wurtz posted a double-double with game-highs of 17 points and 10 rebounds to lead Marion to a 45-42 victory over Freeman Academy in boys' basketball action on Monday.

Nick Gormaker had 15 points, eight rebounds and seven steals for Marion. Lincoln Langerock added four assists for the Bears.

PaSait Mboob and Josh Stahl each had 11 points for Freeman Academy. Teagan Schroeder added 10 points.

Marion hosts Viborg-Hurley on Thursday, the final home game of the season for the Bears. Freeman Academy awaits District 9B play beginning later this month.

FREEMAN ACADEMY (6-12).....6 21 32 42  
MARION (2-13).....14 21 37 45

**Platte-Geddes 60, Scotland 37**

PLATTE — Coby Johnson led Platte-Geddes with 23 points to overtake Scotland 60-37 Monday night in Platte.

Tate Wagner totaled 10 points for Platte-Geddes. Kole Heller totaled seven points, and both Johnson and Cody Steffel grabbed six rebounds.

For Scotland, Seth Ireland netted 10 points. Tanner Skorepa tallied nine points and five rebounds, and Travis Skorepa tallied seven points and five rebounds as well.

Platte-Geddes won the JV game 60-30. Platte-Geddes hosts Winner Tuesday, and Scotland hosts Menno Friday.

SCOTLAND (5-13).....12 19 31 37  
PLATTE-GEDDES (12-5).....20 33 48 60

**Avon 62, Gayville Volin 48**

GAYVILLE — Brandon Koomich led Avon to victory with 30 points against Gayville-Volin in the 62-48 game in Gayville.

Logan Mudder added 19 points for Avon. For Gayville-Volin, Brandon VanOsdal put up 12 points, and Alec Barta added 10.

Avon plays Wolsey-Wessington in Mitchell Thursday, and Gayville-Volin hosts Marion Friday.

AVON (7-10).....17 32 49 62  
GAYVILLE-VOLIN (3-15).....13 25 38 48

**Arlington 61, Castlewood 49**

ARLINGTON — Andrew King, Alex Heuer and Wyatt Forbes each had 12 points to lead Arlington to a 61-49 victory over Castlewood in boys' basketball action on Monday.

King also had eight rebounds and eight assists in the victory. For Castlewood, Adam Ching scored a game-high 17 points. Gunnar Johnson had 12 points.

Arlington, 14-4, hosts Chester Area on Friday. Castlewood, 9-6, hosts Sioux Valley today (Tuesday).

CASTLEWOOD (9-6).....8 23 35 49  
ARLINGTON (14-4).....13 26 45 61

## Davis, White Give U.S. First-Ever Olympic Gold In Ice Dancing

SOCHELI, Russia (AP) — Meryl Davis and Charlie White won the gold medal in ice dance Monday, the first Olympic title in the event for the United States.

Tessa Virtue and Scott Moir of Canada, the 2010 champions, took silver. Russia's Elena Ilinykh and Nikita Katsalapov captured bronze.

Davis and White won silver in Vancouver, but in the four years since have overtaken the Canadians, their training partners in Detroit.

The Americans scored 116.63 points in the free dance to finish with 195.52, 4.53 ahead of Virtue and Moir. Davis and White started skating together in 1997, and on the biggest day of their career, they were nearly flawless. When the music from "Sheherazade" ended with White on a knee, Davis rested her head on White's back in exhausted elation.

"That in itself justified 17 years of hard work," White said of their performance.

As the music swells over the final minute of the program, their feet are in nonstop motion yet every movement is intricately choreographed. Their lifts are a blur as White spins across the ice with Davis held aloft.

They now have one medal of each color after winning bronze in the new team event in Sochi.

Virtue and Moir became the first North Americans to win Olympic ice dance gold at their home Olympics in Vancouver. Their free dance to Russian classical music Monday told the story of their partnership, which also stretches back to 1997.

In a performance at times tender and others triumphant, Moir kisses her hand at the start and several times throughout the program.

## Other Games

**Avon 55, Gayville-Volin 45**

GAYVILLE — Tied at the half, Avon took the second half by the horns and defeated Gayville-Volin 55-45 Monday night in Gayville in their final regular season game.

Ariana Corlog led Avon in scoring with a game high 16 points. Chesney Nagel netted 13 points and snatched nine rebounds, and Heidi Cap added 12 points to the win.

For Gayville-Volin, Laura Nelson cashed in 14 points. Genny Clark added 11 to the total, and Megan Hirsch grabbed 15 rebounds.

Both teams start districts, Avon starts Tuesday, and Gayville-Volin starts Monday.

AVON (16-4).....14 21 37 55  
GAYVILLE-VOLIN (11-7).....10 21 31 45

**Marion 62, Freeman Academy 21**

MARION — The Marion Bears jumped out to a 30-13 halftime lead and claimed a 62-21 victory over Freeman Academy in girls' basketball action on Monday.

Devin Nelson led Marion with 13 points and four steals. Erica Schoenwald added 10 rebounds in the victory.

Hannah Yoder posted six points and three steals for Freeman Academy. Clara Koerner had 10 rebounds and Olivia Boese had three assists for the Bobcats.

Marion hosts Viborg-Hurley on Thursday. Freeman Academy travels to Canistota today (Tuesday).

FREEMAN ACADEMY (0-17).....8 13 18 21  
MARION (6-13).....17 30 35 46

**Hanson 42, Mt. Vernon-Plankinton 40**

ALEXANDRIA — Sarah Kayser sunk two free throws in the final seconds of Hanson's game against Mount Vernon-Plankinton to give Hanson the lead that won them the game 42-40 in Alexandria.

Kynedi Cheeseman led Hanson with 11 points and five rebounds. Sydney Dodd added nine points, and Kayser also snatched six rebounds to contribute to the win.

For Mount Vernon-Plankinton Megan Bulms totaled a game high 17 points. Close behind her was Becca Glanzer with 16 points. Makenzie Katst grabbed five rebounds.

Hanson won the JV game 41-30. Hanson starts its district tournament next week, and Mount Vernon Plankinton hosts Bon Homme Tuesday.

MT. VERNON-PLANKINTON (12-6).....6 18 29 40  
HANSON (18-2).....10 23 31 42

**McCook Central-Mont. 62, Tri-Valley 51**

SALEM — Morgan Koepsell was a perfect 8-of-8 from the field and 4-of-4 from the line, finishing with 20 points and 11 rebounds to lead McCook Central-Montrose to a 62-51 victory over Tri-Valley in girls' basketball action on Monday.

Brianna Painter scored 18 points and had five assists and five steals for MCM. Laura Klautd netted 10 points. C.J. Ristesund had seven rebounds and Rachael Laetsch had five assists in the victory.

For Tri-Valley, Sam Sommer scored 13 points, and Mariah Swier and Abbie Heiberger each had 12 points to lead the way.

McCook Central-Montrose begins play in the Region 5A Tournament next week. Tri-Valley, 14-5, travels to Baltic on Thursday.

TRI-VALLEY (14-5).....18 28 37 51  
MCCOOK CENTRAL-MONT. (10-10).....10 22 40 62

# LANCER BASKETBALL

Tomorrow Night! MMC vs. Dakota Wesleyan on Wednesday, February 19th

WOMEN'S TIP-OFF: 6 PM | MEN'S TIP-OFF: 8 PM | CIMPL ARENA

Join us as River City Dance will be performing at half-time!

THIS HOME GAME BROUGHT TO YOU BY  
Yankton Ag, Wells Fargo  
and Yankton Medical Clinic