

Gazelles Aim For Record Performance At State Gymnastics



P&D FILE PHOTO

Yankton-Bon Homme senior Ashtyn Haak competes on the uneven parallel bars during a home meet earlier this season. Haak and the Gazelles will be aiming for school records for best team finish (4th) and team score (140.2) when they begin competition in the S.D. State Gymnastics Meet on Friday in Aberdeen.

Vermillion, Wagner Set For Class A Meet

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK
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Before the Yankton-Bon Homme gymnastics team took the podium as a seventh place finisher a year ago, the Gazelles had gone eight straight years without a top-8 finish. In five of those years, the Gazelles finished 12th out of 12.

But head coach Luke Youmans and the Gazelles feel like they've put those struggles behind them, and hope to prove it with what would be the team's best-ever finish at a state meet.

The Gazelles take part in the S.D. State Gymnastics Championships on Friday at Aberdeen Central High School with realistic goals of breaking the program's record for team score and for highest state finish.

"It's really exciting to see all the hard work pay off," said Elsie Kotalik, one of

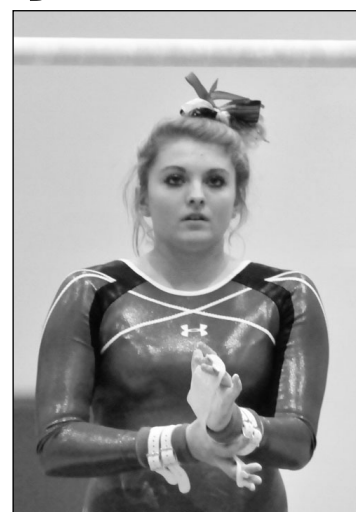
two seniors on the squad. "It's been a blessing to have a team that can go out and be one of the top teams in the state. It feels good to be a senior and leaving the team on a good note."

Kotalik and fellow senior Ashtyn Haak were part of the squad when the Gazelles had the final two of five 12th place finishes in six years. In the past three seasons, they've been a part of the climb up, with the team score improving each season.

"The girls that are coming in now don't realize the work it took to get to this level," Youmans said. "Six years ago, Elsie and Ashtyn were a part of a program that was not very good. They've seen both ends of the spectrum."

"They've put in the time, stuck with it and emerged."

This season the squad comes into state off one of the best performances in program history, a score of 139.025 and a third place finish in the Eastern South



P&D FILE PHOTO

Yankton-Bon Homme senior Elsie Kotalik prepares to compete on the uneven parallel bars during a home meet earlier this season. She and Ashtyn Haak are the two seniors on the Gazelles' state tournament roster.

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DWU Outguns Lancers

BY KEITH A. BROCKBERG
P&D Correspondent

The Mount Marty College Lancers, usually looking at seeding for the Great Plains Athletic Conference Tournament this time of year, found themselves looking for a third-straight win as their season entered its last week.

To do so, the Lancers had to defeat the Dakota Wesleyan Tigers, who have improved steadily under fourth-year head coach Jason Christensen and are looking for a second consecutive 20-win season.

Mount Marty battled back to take a second-half lead over the Tigers before eventually falling 82-72 Wednesday night at Laddie E. Cimpl Arena.

"They've got a nice team — hats off to them," Mount Marty head coach Tom Schlimgen said of the Tigers. "They killed us on the inside in the first half; in the second half, we did a better job on that but then their perimeter people got going."

"They're just a good ball program; they're well-coached and they're disciplined," Mount Marty sophomore Raquel Sutera said of Dakota Wesleyan. "Sometimes our shots didn't fall like theirs were falling."

Sutera carried the Lancers through the first 10 minutes of play on her heavily padded right shoulder.

The sophomore from Tabor, neared her 12.5 points-per-game season average by scoring 11 points in the first seven-plus minutes.

Sutera cued up for her third 3-pointer of the stretch, giving the Lancers an 18-15 lead with 12:50 to play in the first half.

After freshman Logan Wagner swished a 3-pointer to give the Lancers a 32-28 lead with 5:30 remaining in the first half, the Tigers took control on the boards and outscored Mount Marty 17-5 the rest of the way to take a 45-37 halftime lead.

Erica Herrold led the Tigers with 10 points as DWU shot 48.6-percent in the half. The visitors also controlled the boards as they held a 27-13 advantage — including seven rebounds on the offensive end.

"Defensively, we struggled in the first half, but I'm pretty sure Mount Marty and coach Schlimgen had something to do with," Christensen said.

The Lancer comeback began with a driving basket from Sutera and a trey from Cassidy Gebhart.

Lancer top scorer Wagner found her groove and pulled the Lancers to within a point with a drive and a scoop.

Wagner gave the Lancers a 47-45 lead with a 3-pointer at the 16:40 mark of the second half.

Mount Marty continued to lead as Gebhart added a pair of baskets and Wagner popped in a jumper for a 53-51 home lead.

Celeste Beck pushed the Tigers back in front at 57-55 with a jumper from the lane.

From there, Dakota Wesleyan went on a 14-5 run and took their first double-digit lead at 71-60 on a hoop from Micaela Erickson.

The Tigers withstood a late shooting surge from Wagner to seal the 82-72 final.

Sutera finished with 20 points as Wagner had 19 and Gebhart scored 16.

Erickson paced five Tigers



JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

Mount Marty's Allison De Kam shoots against the defense of Dakota Wesleyan's Kim Johnson during the first half of their Great Plains Athletic Conference women's basketball game on Wednesday at Laddie E. Cimpl Arena.

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Nebraska State Wrestling Tournament Begins Today

OMAHA, Neb. — The Randolph Cardinals take six wrestlers, including three District champions, to the Nebraska State Wrestling Tournament, which begins today (Thursday) at Qwest Center in Omaha, Neb.

Drew Loberg (132), Dylan Loberg (195) and Austin Gubbels (285) won District D-2 titles for the Cardinals, and will

have easier first-round draws as a result. Drew Loberg (Fr., 39-5) faces Justin Criner (Fr., 18-8) of Hebron. Dylan Loberg (Jr., 38-1) faces Emmett Hoover of Hyannis (So., 25-15).

Gubbels (Sr., 30-11) faces Kain Forbes (15-11) of Crawford.

Also for Randolph, Jesse Schmidt (So., 27-16) faces Alex Loeffler (So., 14-4) of McCook Junction at 120, Colton Korth

(Jr., 20-15) faces Tanner Wernsman (Sr., 38-3) of Sidney at 160 and James Oelrich (So., 17-19) faces Trey Dodson (Jr., 38-7) of North Platte St. Patrick's at 113.

In Class C, Creighton-Verdigre and Laurel-Concord-Coleridge each qualified three wrestlers.

For Creighton-Verdigre, Garrett Zimmerer (So., 30-7) faces Paifton Lech (So., 22-10) of Ord at 113 pounds, Jake Ripp (Sr.,

32-12) faces David Gross (So., 26-6) of St. Paul at 145 pounds and Ean Stacken (So., 23-18) faces Andrew Bader (Sr., 33-10) of Centennial at 160 pounds.

For LCC, Brett Haisch (Sr., 40-7) faces Gage Hartline (Sr., 37-4) of Fort Calhoun at 182

pounds, Chris Heydon (Sr., 37-10) faces Brad Schoch (So., 27-18) of Hastings St. Cecelia at 160 pounds and Ethan

Hirschman (Sr., 35-11) faces Bayard's Zaine Gallegos (So., 25-6) at heavyweight.

Crofton sends two wrestlers to state. Lucas Miller (So., 28-8) faces Gordon-Rushville's Garrett Shadbolt (Sr. 26-10) at 113 pounds, and Jake Guenther (Sr., 26-10) draws Valley's Jake Fulton (Sr. 17-14) at 195 pounds.

Competition runs through Saturday.

Dakota Wesleyan Powers Past Lancers



JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

Mount Marty's Alex Irvine, 24, gets inside of Dakota Wesleyan's Luke Bamberg, 2, and Jalen Voss, 0, for a layup during their Great Plains Athletic Conference men's basketball game on Wednesday at Laddie E. Cimpl Arena.

BY JEREMY HOECK
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Not even a hot-shooting second half was enough for the Mount Marty men to avoid a lop-sided loss.

And their ninth defeat in 10 games.

The latest team to victimize the Lancers was Dakota Wesleyan, which hit 11 three-pointers on the way to an 87-52 GPAC win Wednesday night at Cimpl Arena.

More than just the three-pointers, the visiting Tigers (17-13, 10-10) attempted 28 more shots than Mount Marty — which still out-shot DWU 49 percent to 47 percent.

"With all those offensive rebounds and our turnovers, that's a ton of extra possessions," said MMC head coach Andrew Baker, whose team fell to 4-23 overall and 2-17 in the GPAC.

"That's the difference right there."

And if Tigers' three-point shooting wasn't enough to deal with, they were opportunistic. DWU had a 14-2 edge on the offensive glass and scored 33 points off 17 Mount Marty turnovers.

"Our guys did a great job crashing the boards," DWU head coach Matt Wilber said. "That was one of those games where you work hard to get a good shot every single time."

It didn't take the Tigers six minutes to drain four three-pointers, and the visitors' margin was 24-9 at the mid-

way point of the first half.

The Lancers got as close as 11 points, but DWU kept the pressure on and took a 46-23 lead into the halftime break.

Both teams were over 50 percent in the second half, but the Lancers could do nothing to close the large gap.

"They've got good players and they played harder," Baker said. "We weren't physical and weren't dedicated to being gritty."

The biggest thorn in Mount Marty's side was DWU sophomore guard Trae Bergh, who scored 23 points, grabbed eight rebounds and dished out four assists — all team highs.

"Trae's been tremendous for us," Wilber said. "I don't know how the all-conference stuff is going to shake out, but he's been at an all-conference level for us."

On the flip side for the Lancers, sophomore Alex Irvine scored 12 points, junior Chris Richardson had 11 points and nine rebounds, while juniors Bud Smith and Lorenzo Davis both added eight points.

With new head coaches on either side of the Lancers-Tigers rivalry, it could reach a new level in the coming years, Wilber said.

"I'm smart enough to know what this series means," he said. "Our guys

Stiegelmeier: Expectations Growing For Jackrabbits

BY JEREMY HOECK
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While talking about the expectation within the South Dakota State University football program to take the next step in the FCS playoffs, head coach John Stiegelmeier reached in his pocket and pulled out a gold medalion.

It was the memento SDSU received for qualifying for the post-season last season — for the second straight year.

Stiegelmeier said it "represents a bad reminder."

"No one competes to finish second. Second is last," he said in his usual jovial manner during a speech at the Yankton Quarterback Club.

He then joked that the staff is having a hard time getting players to come pick up their medals.

Though, as he pointed out, that may sound arrogant to some, that's the position the SDSU program has put itself in of late: Not satisfied with simply winning one game in the playoffs.

During his 40-minute speech, Stiegelmeier recalled people questioning SDSU's move to the D-I ranks a decade ago and whether or not the Jackrabbits could contend.

Suddenly, many of those same people were asking "Is that the best you can do?" after the Jacks lost in the second round of the FCS playoffs.

"That's a pretty good accomplishment, but it's not close to what the expectations are in our program," the coach said.

After moving to the Division I-AA ranks in 2004, the Jackrabbits posted seasons of 6, 6, 7, 7, 8, 5 and 5 wins heading into the 2012 campaign.

Suddenly, the corner was turned and SDSU became not only a playoff contender, but a playoff regular — reaching the second round each of the past two seasons.

Winning on the road at Northern Arizona in the first round last fall was a step forward, Stiegelmeier said, but the Jacks "have got to make some bigger steps."

"The ideal situation for us is to finish the year as one of the top eight seeds," he said later in an interview with the Press & Dakotan. "You're guaranteed a bye and guaranteed home games."

"What a great thing to get, that bye and rest your team."

On Recruiting

One of the topics addressed Wednesday by Stiegelmeier was recruiting, and the 21 athletes signed by SDSU on Feb. 5.

Naturally, in a room full of Yankton (and area) residents, J.J. Hejna — the standout player for the Yankton Bucks — was a popular target.

Stiegelmeier pointed to Hejna being a 3-sport athlete and that once the freshman arrives on the Brookings campus in the fall, he could become even stronger.

"He's been spread so thin, so that's the nice thing, to get him to focus just on football," Stiegelmeier said. "I'm guessing that with the right nutrition, which he'll have, he might gain 20 pounds in the blink of an eye."

The coach used former Jacks standout Adam Timmerman as an example. Timmerman, who went on to play in