Kovash, Coyotes Begin Summit League Meet Today

BY JEREMY HOECK

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VERMILLION — Brandon Kovash has been part of success during his college career.

Relays, team championships, individual medals.

And now, the fifth-year senior for the University of South Dakota men's track team, is primed for individual glory.

Kovash is ranked second in both the 60-meter dash and 200-meter dash — his coach believes he could win both — for the Summit League Indoor Track & Championships, which will be held today (Friday) and Saturday in Fort Wayne, Ind.

guess," Kovash joked Tuesday.

Although Kovash is far from alone atop the pre-meet rankings for the defending indoor champion Coyotes, he was one of the first names dropped by head coach Dave Gottsleben.

"He's had some success before, but he's had a great indoor season," the veteran coach said. "For him, this is a pretty meaningful meet.'

In short, it will be the last collegiate competition for Kovash, a native of Harrisburg whom Gottsleben said "was basically a walk-on for

Kovash played complementary roles in the Coyotes winning Great

West Conference and Summit League indoor team titles during his career. Last year at this time, for example, he finished fourth in the 60 and 200 at the Summit indoor meet which USD eventually won.

This year, however, as the rest of his team has continued to develop around him, Kovash too has developed into one of the league's premier sprinters.

"It adds some confidence, knowing that even if you don't do what you're supposed to, we've got guys behind you," he said.

That's the story about the USD men's squad: Depth.

Based on rankings, the Coyotes boast the top time or mark in 11

events. Though seniors comprise five of those individual events, a potential second consecutive indoor crown hinges on the rest of the field for USD.

Among the 28 men's athletes USD will take with it to Indiana, there are six seniors, seven juniors, seven sophomores and eight fresh-

North Dakota State was tabbed the pre-season favorite, but according to the places (which, of course, will likely change), the Coyotes are projected to score nearly 250 points – the Bison, around 210. Injuries to key athletes, though, are likely to make it another tight race, Gottsleben said.

we've had a really good indoor year," he said. "Now you have to follow that up with success at confer-

"It will be quite exciting, that's

for sure. The Coyotes are expected to be especially dangerous on the track, where they could roll up nearly 130 points. Ranked first are sophomore Teivaskie Lewin (200, 60-meter hurdles, long jump), senior Jeff Mettler (mile run, 3K, 5K) and sophomore Christian Nielsen (200, an event the Coyotes have the top four times).

Relays also favor the Coyotes, as

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Two Bucks

Earn All-ESD

Accolades

The Yankton Bucks had

two individuals named to the

Senior Casey Skillingstad

FROM P&D STAFF REPORTS

All-Eastern South Dakota Conference wrestling team,

announced on Thursday.

and sophomore Spencer

Class A Wrestling Tourna-

ment, which begins today (Friday) at the Rushmore

Plaza Čívic Center in Rapid

son due to injury, will be

going for a fourth straight

state tournament medal for

the Bucks. His 123 victories

(123-69) ranks him fourth in

set a school record for victo-

ries in a season, eclipsing the

old mark of 39, set by both Nick and Ben Smith (each 39-

0). Huber, who missed much

of the 2012-13 season due to

injury, already boasts 93 ca-

reer victories (93-30), and he will look to become just the

12th Buck to score 100 career

This is the first year that

the All-ESD team for wrestling

was selected by a vote of the

league coaches. In previous years, the ESD held an indi-

vidual tournament, with the

top three in each weight class being recognized as All-ESD.

Bison Clinch

Summit League

victories early next season.

Huber (45-10) has already

YHS wrestling history.

Skillingstad (24-6), who missed a month of this sea-

Huber were selected to the

elite list. Both will be compet-

ing in the South Dakota State

Coyotes Escape NDSU In OT

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VERMILLION — There must have been a tournament seed on the line for the University of South Dakota

What else would explain one of their most impressive

comebacks of the season? "Energy," according to sophomore reserve Margaret McCloud.

After rallying from 19 points down in the second half, the Coyotes scratched their way past North Dakota State 95-87 in overtime Thursday night at the Dakota-"We came out really flat in

the first half, and we knew that," said McCloud, who had 16 points and 11 rebounds. "It's one thing to tell each other to pick up our energy, it's another thing to do it.'

But talk about surviving. Head coach Amy Williams opened her post-game comments with a "Phew."

'Our team showed a lot of grit to fight back and come back in the second half and overtime," she later said.

Earlier in the night, Fort Wayne beat Western Illinois to move to 7-6 in the league standings. The Coyotes (16-12, 7-6) needed a win to keep pace with the Mastodons for the third seed in the Summit League Tournament.

All three teams have one game remaining in the regular

Of course, during the game, USD was more concerned with not having a repeat of last Thursday's road loss at Omaha. That night, the Covotes battled back from a 17-point hole but ended up losing by eight.

That performance was a persistent talking point all week for USD, according to Williams.

We talked about not letting that be the case here again," Williams said. "We had to scratch and claw and fight to get back in it, now you have to stay in it and slam that door shut.'

After a lackadaisical first half (NDSU scored 49 points), the Covotes found themselves down 52-33 early in the second half. They then went on a 28-7 run to take a

"It's just one of those things where you know you're better than that," senior Polly Harrington said. "That first half didn't show it."



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this story at www.yankton.net.

South Dakota's Polly Harrington (33) drives past North Dakota State's Marena Whittle (32) on her way to scoring a field goal. Harrington led the Coyote offense with 23 points in their thrilling overtime win over the Bison Thursday.

In many ways, it was indicative of their season: A slow start and a strong finish. Closing strong has been a rallying cry all season for the

program. "In our minds, that's what really sticks out," said Harrington, who had 23 points and six rebounds. "That's what kicked in in the second

"Play your best basketball right now, because you don't get too many chances.'

Following a nail-biting end of the second half (in which the Bison hit a game-tying three-pointer with 33 seconds left), the Coyotes started the overtime period on a 9-2 run

and held on for the 8-point

North Dakota State (6-22, 2-11) was aided by 31 points and eight rebounds apiece from Holly Johnson and Marena Whittle.

The Coyotes, meanwhile, put four players in double figures and had a 20-32 edge in points in the paint. Junior Nicole Seekamp had 16 points, and sophomore point guard Tia Hemiller added 14 points and 10 rebounds.

Even with Sunday's home game with rival South Dakota State looming, the Coyotes couldn't allow themselves time to look ahead, Williams

"Once the ball tips up, it's a 40-minute battle, we were playing possession by possession," she said.

After saving she heard Fort Wayne lost, Williams said, "We're in a pretty good situation Sunday, to give ourselves a chance.

Of course, that would require the Coyotes to upset the Jackrabbits, who won the first meeting by 19 points. We just need to calm

down and handle that pressure, and play Coyote basketball," Harrington said. "That's one thing we didn't do when we were up there.

You can follow Jeremy

NORTH DAKOTA STATE (6-22, 2-11)

Hoeck on Twitter at

Holly Johnson 10-23 6-7 31; Marena Whittle 15-27 0-1 31; Miki Stephenson 1-4 1-2 3; Brooke LeMar 5-11 2-4 13; Bree Whatman 0-6 0-0 0; Kahla Becken 2-9 0-0 4; Liz Keena 1-2 3-4 5; Emily Spier 0-0 0-0 0; Alisa Brown 0-1 0-0 0: Catavia Jones 0-0 0-0 0 TOTALS 34-

SOUTH DAKOTA (16-12, 7-6) Lisa Loeffler 0-4 7-8 7; Polly Harrington 7-9 8-8 23; Tia Hemiller 5-9 3-4 14; Raeshel Contreras 4-12 1-1 9; Nicole Seekamp 4-16 8-10 16: Madeleine White 0-0 0-0 (; Kelly Stewart 2-4 3-3 8; Taylor Moore 0-1 0-0 0; Bridget Arens 1-3 0-0 2; Margaret McCloud 7-9 2-5 16. TOTALS 30-67 32-39 95. Halftime: NDSU 49-33. Three-Pointers: NDSU 7-

19 (Johnson 5-10, LeMar 1-2, Whittle 1-3, Stephenson 13 (Johnson 3-1), Leiman 1-2, Whitten 1-3, Stephreinson 0-1, Becken 0-1, Whatman 0-2), USD 3-12 (Harrington 1-1, Hemiller 1-1, Steward 1-2, Moore 0-1, Contreras 0-3, Seekamp 0-4). Total Rebounds: NDSU 42 (Keena 9), USD 50 (McCloud 11). Assists: NDSU 9 (LeMar 3), USD 14 (Loeffler 4), Turnovers: NDSU 6, USD 15, Persona Fouls: NDSU 26, USD 20. Fouled Out: Stephenson. Attendance: 1405.

LENNOX (13-8)14 30 39 56 DAKOTA VALLEY (12-9)8 16 28 45

Region 5A

Mount Vernon-Plankin-

ton 38, Tri-Valley 30
PLANKINTON — Mount Vernon-

Plankinton snunk past Tri-Valley 38-30 on

Thursday evening in the District 5A semi-

Becca Glanzer led MVP (15-5) wuth 19 points and 11 rebounds. Megan

Mariah Sweir and Abbie Heiberger led

Tri-Valley (17-3) with seven points a

piece.
MVP will advance to the Distrct 5A

championship against West Central next

week. The loss ends Tri-Valley's season.

MOUNT VERNON-PLANKINTON (15-5)12 17 23 38 TRI-VALLEY (17-3)11 25 24 30

Bullsma added 10 points in the victory.

Men's litle FARGO, N.D. — North

Dakota State clinched the Summit League regular season title in impressive fashion, rolling past South Dakota 82-54 in men's basketball action on Saturday.

The victory earned the Bison (22-6, 11-2 Summit) the top seed in the Summit League Men's Basketball Tournaemnt. which begins March 8 in Sioux Falls. The top seed earns NDSU a bye into the semifinals on Monday, March 10.

Taylor Braun and Mike Felt each scored 15 points for NDSU, with Felt's points coming on 5-7 shooting from threepoint range. Braun also had 12 rebounds and six assists.

TrayVonn Wright scored 14 points and Marshall Bjorklund had 13 points in the victory.

Karim Rowson led USD (12-16, 6-7 Summit) with 10 points. Tyler Flack and Brandon Bos each scored nine points.

USD travels to South Dakota State on Saturday to end the regular season. Regardless of the outcome, USD will be the fifth seed in the Summit League Tournament, and will play on

Sunday, March 9. N. DAKOTA ST. 82, S. DAKOTA 54 S. DAKOTA (12-16) Flack 3-9 2-3 9, Gruis 2-5 1-1 5, Norris 2-3 0-0 5,

Rowson 2-7 6-6 10, Larson 1-5 0-0 2, Bos 1-5 6-6 9 ROWSON 2-7 6-6 10, Larson 1-3 0-0 2, Bos 1-3 6-6 9, Thoseby 1-5 3-4 5, Kasperbauer 2-3 1-2 6, Foley 0-0 1-2 1, Robertson 1-6 0-0 2. Totals 15-48 20-24 54. N. DAKOTA ST. (22-6) Wright 4-9 4-6 14, Bjorklund 6-10 1-2 13, Alexander 2-5 4-4 9, Brown 1-2 0-0 2, Braun 6-13 1-2 15, Newell

0-1 0-0 0, Felt 5-7 0-0 15, Checkal 0-0 0-0 0, Dupree 3-4 0-0 7, Kading 1-1 1-2 3, Wemer 0-0 0-2 0, Aaberg 2-6 0-0 4. Totals 30-58 11-18 82. Halftime—N. Dakota St. 36-15. 3-Point Goals—S.

Hailtime—N. Dakota St. Jos-Do J. S-Point Goals—S. Dakota 4-11, (Norris 1-1, Kasperbauer 1-1, Bos 1-2, Flack 1-3, Larson 0-1, Robertson 0-3), N. Dakota St. 11-19 (Felt 5-7, Wright 2-3, Braun 2-5, Dupree 1-2, Alexander 1-2). Fouled Out—None. Rebounds—S. Dakota 27 (Flack, Robertson 5), N. Dakota St. 37 (Braun 12). Assists—S. Dakota 5 (Bos, Flack, Gruis, Larson, Thoseby 1), N. Dakota St. 13 (Braun 6). Total Fouls—S. Dakota 13, N. Dakota St. 19. A—3,804.

S.D. STATE 78. DENVER 69: BROOKINGS. S.D. (AP) — Brayden Carlson scored 22 points and Jordan Dykstra added 19 as South Dakota State defeated Denver 78-69 on Thursday night. Dykstra, in grabbing eight rebounds, became the third Jackrabbit in SDSU history to surpass 1.500 points and 800 rebounds in his career

Cody Larson added 16 points for SDSU (17-11, 9-4 Summit League) while Chad White added 11 points and Jake Bittle a career-high 11 re-

bounds.
The Pioneers (15-13, 8-5) got 18 points from Jalen Love and 10 from Marcus Byrd. Brett Olson, with nine points, went over 1,000 for his career.

A 7-0 spurt put SDSU up nine, 57-48, with 8

minutes left. Denver would get within six, but no closer.

The Jackrabbits made 24 of 32 free throws with Dykstra and Carson each making 9 of 10.

SDSU is tied with IPFW for second place with

one regular-season game remaining

Kaiser Leads Cedar Catholic To Sub-District C2-9 Title

South Central will play Andes Central

in district play next week, while Avon will

SOUTH CENTRAL (12-8)......17 27 35 43 58

GAYVILLE — Gayville-Volin defeated

Alec Barta led Gayville-Volin (4-15)

Jacob Wuertz led Marion (3-16) with

Gayville-Volin will travel to Alcester for

regional play. Marion will also compete in

with 16 points, 11 rebounds and five as-

sists. Brandon Van Osdel added 14

18 points and 11 rebounds in the loss.

Marion 62-49 on Thursday evening in

Mudder had seven rebounds Kochmich added 11 rebounds.

Gayville-Volin 62,

Marion 49

points in the victory.

regional play next week.

GAYVILLE-VOLIN (4-15) MARION (3-16)

Catholic advanced to District play with a 69-58 victory over Crofton in the Sub-District C2-9 final on Thursday night.

James Kaiser led Cedar Catholic (17-7) with 23 points, while Taylor Kathol added 19 points in the victory.

Brock Mueller led Crofton (14-10) with 16 points, while Austin Woockman added 14 points in the loss.

Cedar Catholic advances to play Ainsworth in district play on Monday. Crofton ends their season with the loss.

CEDAR CATHOLIC (17-7)... CROFTON (14-10).....

D1-4: Randolph 48, Bloomfield 36

PONCA, Neb. — Randolph advanced to district play with a 48-36 victory over Bloomfield on Thursday evening. lan Nordives led Randolph (19-4) with

points in the victory. Cody Beckmann led Bloomfield (12-10) with 12 points, while Quinn O'Brien added 11 points. Beckmann added seven rebounds in the loss.

14 points, while Garrett Watters added 12

RANDOLPH (19-4) BLOOMFIELD (12-10)6 23 36 486 15 23 36 **C2-4: Winnebago 64,**

Homer 53 WAYNE, Neb. - Winneabago defeated Homer 64-53 in the C2-4 Subdistrict final on Thursday in Wayne.

Jeremy Merrick led Winnebago (26-3) with 21 points, while David Wingett added 18 points in the victory.

Chase Dahl led Homer (15-11) with 16 points in the loss, while Jake Brand added 12 points. Winnebago will advance to district

play next week, while Homer ends their season with the loss. ...11 26 45 64 ...15 29 25 53

C1-8: Norfolk Catholic 63, **Boone Central-NG 58**

NORFOLK, Neb. — Norfolk Catholic kept their state tournament dreams alive with a 63-58 overtime victory over Boone Central-Newman Grove on Thursday

Matt Miller led Norfolk Catholic (16-10) with 15 points, while Dylan Borer added 14 points. Derek Gentrup led BCNG (20-7) with

15 points in the loss, Norfolk Catholic will advance to district play and will play Wayne on Monday. The loss ends BCNG's season.

Regular Season South Central 58, Avon 49, OT AVON — South Central snuck past

Avon 58-49 on Thursday evening in over-

Sam Hazen led South Central (12-8) with 19 points and 10 rebounds. Zach Seaburn added 15 points, while Dell Dea added 12 points in the victory. Mudder and Kochmich led Avon (8-12) with 18 points.

Gregory 49 Platte-Geddes defeated Thursday evening.

Platte-Geddes 59,

Carter Dykstra added 17 points in the vic-Gavin Thomas led Gregory (15-5) with

points in the loss. Both teams await their district tournament fate on Tuesday. PLATTE-GEDDES (14-6)

EPJ, Lennox Make Region 5A Final Tuesday for the right to advance to the

ELK POINT — Keely Bertram and McKenzie Mennenga each scored 19 points to lead Elk Point-Jefferson to a 60-42 victory over Vermillion in the semifinals of the Region 4A girls' basketball tournament on

Skylore Curry had 10 points and seven rebounds off the bench for EPJ (18-2). Bertram finished with 16 rebounds and four assists in the victory. For Vermillion, which fin-

ished at 11-10, Josie Huber led the way with 14 points and 15 rebounds. Haleigh Melstad had four steals. EPJ faces Lennox in the re-

gion final on Tuesday. VERMILLION (11-10)......4 13 25 42 ELK POINT-JEFFERSON (18-2).......12 24 39 60

Lennox 56, **Dakota Valley 45** ELK POINT — Lennox defeated Dakota Valley 56-45 to earn their right to

the Region 4A championship. Lennox (13-8) was led by Tara Kuper with 10 points and seven rebounds. Taylor Anderson added nine points and seven rebounds in the victory

Carlie Long led Dakota Valley (12-9) with 10 points, while Haley Hoffman added eight points in the loss. Lennox will play Elk Point Jefferson on

District 5B Castlewood 50, Arlington 40

CASTLEWOOD — The Castlewood Warriors had 17 assists on 18 field goals in a 50-40 victory over Arlington in the semifinals of the District 5B girls' basketball tournament on Thursday.

Haley Strait had 13 points and Sierra Johnson had 11 points, eight rebounds and five assists for Castlewood (16-2). Regan Benike and Stephanie Kerkvliet each had nine points in the victory. For Arlington (10-10), Samantha Boeck led the way with 12 points. Brooklyn Judstra added 10 points and seven rebounds

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Gregory 59-49 in a hard fought battle on Coby Johnson led Platte-Geddes (14-6) with 19 points and nine rebounds.

13 points, while Andrew Taggart added 11