

Press&Dakotan DAILY DOSE

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



BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK
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This week the national sports media has been bragging up the "dominance" of the Southeast Conference when it comes to football. But the SEC could take a few lessons in dominance from Great Plains Athletic Conference women's basketball teams.

Since the league formed for the 2000-01 season, the GPAC has sent nine different programs to the NAIA Division II Tournament. Seven of those teams made the national semifinals, including the 2002-03 sea-

son when the entire final four was made up of GPAC teams. And the GPAC has taken 11 of the 12 national titles.

Let that sink in a little bit: 11 of 12 national champions. If a NCAA Division I conference had the track record that the GPAC women do, ESPN would talk about them non-stop. People would be as sick of hearing about the GPAC as many of us are about SEC football or Big East men's basketball.

But those leagues have two or three programs that dominate the news. In the GPAC, the fourth-best team ranks top-10 in the nation. The fifth-, sixth- and seventh-ranked get national recognition as well, but are

hampered by the fact that most voters have a tough time voting for seven teams from the same league in the top 25 — even if the league deserves it.

MMC's victory over fourth-ranked Morningside on Wednesday is just another example of the depth of the league. Dordt, which upended then-top-ranked and previously unbeaten Concordia on Saturday, is another.

The top seven teams in the GPAC could realistically win a game or two in the national tournament, if given the chance. But, realistically, only four or five will get the chance. That's what makes the GPAC so tough.

Western Illinois basketball player Terrell Parks was the December honoree on the men's side.

Nebraska Adds Sand Volleyball Starting This Spring

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska is adding sand volleyball as a women's varsity sport beginning this spring. Sand volleyball has been an NCAA emerging sport for women since 2011, and 15 Division I schools sponsored teams last year. Athletic director Shawn Eichorst said Wednesday that details for Nebraska's program were finalized the past few days.

Nebraska will not offer scholarships. John Cook, who coaches the Cornhuskers' powerful on-court team, will be the head coach and players from the fall squad will join him.

Teams are required to play at least eight dates, with a minimum of three dual matches. The Huskers will play no home competitions this spring.

The NCAA will sponsor a sand volleyball championship when 40 schools sponsor teams, but no earlier than 2016.

Orchard-Clearwater Boys Power Past Creighton

CREIGHTON, Neb. — Orchard-Clearwater used four players in double figures to down Creighton 54-32 in boys' basketball action on Tuesday.

Travis Martin led the balanced O-C attack with 13 points. Trent Allemang, Andy Kerkman and Trevor Minor each had 11 points. Kerkman, the son of former Lancer Kelly Kerkman, had a game-high 16 rebounds in the victory.

For Creighton, Seth Wilmes had 10 points and six rebounds. Bronson Pahl added nine points.

O-C, 7-2, travels to Plainview today (Thursday), Creighton, 9-2, hosts Laurel-Concord-Colebridge in North-east Nebraska Activities Conference action on Friday. ORCHARD-CLEARWATER (7-2)17 30 41 54 CREIGHTON (9-2)7 14 19 32

Canistota Girls Clip G-V

GAYVILLE — Canistota defeated Gayville-Volin 46-30 in South Dakota girls basketball action Tuesday in Gayville.

Jenny Hofer led Canistota (2-7) with 11 points nine re-

bounds. Natasha Letcher contributed eight points three assists in the victory.

Kelia Barta had 15 points and five rebounds for Gayville-Volin (2-6).

Canistota will host Howard tomorrow (Thursday), Gayville-Volin will host Viborg-Hurley tomorrow (Thursday). CANISTOTA (2-7)14 27 35 46 GAYVILLE-VOLIN (2-6)3 14 24 30

Merriam Named SportsCaster Of The Year

The National SportsCasters and Sportswriters Association named Tyler Merriam the 2012 South Dakota SportsCaster of the Year this week for his work broadcasting South Dakota State football men's basketball and baseball, and for hosting "The Jackrabbit Insider" over the last year.

A Pierre native, Merriam called his first Jackrabbit baseball game in 2006 as an SDSU student, and also did play-by-play for Jackrabbit softball and volleyball before becoming the full-time voice of Jackrabbit women's basketball in 2008.

He joined longtime voice of Jackrabbit football and men's basketball Steve Imming as a color commentator in the football booth two years before taking over the play-by-play duties for both football and men's basketball in 2011.

Merriam joins former "Voices of the Jackrabbits" Norm Hilsen, who won the award four times (1972, 73, 80 and 81) and Imming, who earned the honor in 1998, to win South Dakota SportsCaster of the Year honors.

The NSSA presents a national award and a state award for both categories each year. Mike Henriksen of "SportsMax" won the South Dakota SportsCaster of the Year and Terry Vandrovec of the Sioux Falls Argus Leader won the SportsWriter of the Year in 2011.

Merriam's cousin Roger Merriam of the Watertown Public Opinion won the South Dakota SportsWriter of the Year. Both Tyler and Roger receive their awards at the 54th Annual NSSA Awards Banquet on June 10, 2013 in Salsburg, N.C.

Eide Named Summit League Player Of Month

ELMHURST, Ill. — South Dakota State University

women's basketball player Ashley Eide has been selected as Summit League Female Athlete of the Month for her performance during the month of December.

A senior from Sioux Falls, Eide helped lead the Jackrabbits to a 6-1 record during December, while averaging 17.9 points and 5.9 rebounds per game. She tied a career high with 27 points and set new single-game marks with 13 rebounds and seven three-pointers in a win at Georgetown on Dec. 21. She topped the 20-mark on two other occasions, scoring 25 points in a Dec. 18 win over Delaware State and tallying 20 in the Summit League opener Dec. 30 against North Dakota State.

Eide shot 54 percent (46-of-86) from the field in the seven games, including 47 percent (22-of-47) from three-point range. She also averaged three assists and 1.3 steals in 28.1 minutes per game.

League-leading SDSU's only loss in December came at nationally ranked Penn State on Dec. 16, a game in which Eide scored a team-high 14 points.

Eide is the third Jackrabbit student-athlete to receive a Summit League Athlete of the Month award this academic year. Men's cross country runner Michael Krnsak and women's soccer player Diana Potterveld were both honored in October.

Coyotes

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While playing in 16 games during the 2010-11 season for the Cardinals as a true freshman, Harrington averaged 1.8 points and 0.7 rebounds in just over five minutes per contest as Louisville finished 22-13 overall while making it to the regional semifinals of the NCAA Tournament before being defeated by Gonzaga in their Sweet 16 matchup.

Despite the team success and ability to get on the court her first year, Harrington decided in the spring of 2011 she needed a change.

"It wasn't a good fit," Harrington said of Louisville. "I was not happy and was not close enough to my family."

Not wanting to sit out for a year due to transfer rules applying to Division I schools, Harrington chose Johnson County Community College near her home to continue her transition.

"My freshman year I played but not as much as I wanted to so I didn't want to sit out my sophomore year," the accounting major said. "So I decided to go to a community college where I could play, compete and get better."

Harrington certainly got the opportunity to play, as she helped lead Johnson County to a 32-3 overall record while scoring 11.1 points and grabbing 6.7 boards per game at the school just 20 minutes away from her house.

Johnson County was the first place that current USD coach Amy Williams was able to see Harrington play, except Williams was attending those games while recruiting as the head coach for Rogers State (Okla.).

At this same time, another Coach Williams, Ryun Williams, was recruiting Harrington to come finish her remaining eligibility as a Coyote.

"I really liked him (Ryun Williams) as a head coach and the girls on the team," Harrington said. "I liked the fact that the program was on the uprising and I knew I would play and have fun and enjoy myself."

Harrington committed in early May of 2012, just before Ryun Williams left to take the head coaching job at Colorado State.

"I was disappointed that he decided to leave but I knew I still wanted to come to school here," Harrington added. "It has been really great playing for Coach (Amy) Williams. She is really understanding and has been very helpful learning a new system."

Harrington also mentioned that she enjoys having the com-

petitive fire that Williams brings to practices and games.

"It gets us fired up," she said. "We need to get fired up like that to play better so I like playing under her."

It is safe to say that the feeling is mutual between athlete and coach.

"So far we have had a special bond - everything has been going well," Williams said of having Harrington on her roster. "I think she responds well to me and I am just thrilled that she is in our program."

Williams noted how Harrington is able to consistently wind up with an impressive box score at the end of each game, as she has scored in double figures in 12 of USD's 16 games while scoring fewer than eight points only once.

"She knows how to score and is a load to handle," Williams said. "She brings that presence and scoring ability and consistency and at the end of the game if we think she hasn't had the best game she still has 10 points and six rebounds."

Harrington is also an unselfish team player as she stated that her only individual goal was to become a better rebounder while she wants to focus on helping the Coyotes win a Summit League Championship and get to the postseason.

Both Williams and Harrington attributed confidence as a major factor of her ability to get the ball through the rim a majority of the time, while Williams also noted Harrington's shot selection.

"She plays with confidence and she puts herself in position to take shots that she is capable of shooting at a high percentage," Williams said.

With 13 game remaining for this year's 7-9 USD squad, Harrington is set to become the lone senior and one of only four upperclassmen on next year's Coyote roster, which will give her even more chances to use that composure and confidence to help guide younger teammates.

As far as life after basketball, Harrington hopes to obtain an accounting degree and eventually become a CPA. That is not to say that she would pass up an opportunity to keep playing ball for a few years down the road.

"If I get offered to play basketball, I will keep playing," she said. "If not, I'll pursue my career in accounting."

Harrington travels back to her hometown this weekend as the Coyotes square off against Kansas City in Summit League action on Saturday afternoon. Game time is 2 p.m.

You can follow Chris Riley on Twitter at twitter.com/ChrisCRiley

SCOREBOARD

VOLLEYBALL

YANKTON PARKS & REC

WOMEN'S JUST FOR FUN LEAGUE

RESULTS: Bud Light/Fleg's/NAPA def. Larry's Heating & Cooling 3-0 23-21, 21-19, 23-21; Inside-Outers def. Amanda's Pet Styling 3-0 21-16, 21-13, 22-20; Neu Pond & Landscaping def. Pro-Auto 3-0 21-12, 21-11, 21-14.

STANDINGS: Neu Pond & Landscaping 7-0, Inside-Outers 5-2, Amanda's Pet Styling 4-3, Bud Light/Fleg's/NAPA 3-4, Larry's Heating & Cooling 1-6, Pro-Auto 1-6.

BASKETBALL

YANKTON PARKS & REC

MEN'S JUST FOR FUN LEAGUE

RESULTS: Team Ramrod def. Home Federal Bank 78-59; Conkling Distributing def. Kobe Dtd 63-57.

STANDINGS: Cortrust Bank 3-0, Team Ramrod 2-1, Kobe Dtd 1-2, Conkling Distributing 1-2, Home Federal Bank 1-3.

YANKTON MIDDLE SCHOOL

EIGHTH GRADE GIRLS

1 — HARRISBURG 33, YANKTON 20; YMS Leading Scorers — Josie Saylor 6, Madison Tessler 4, Lindsey Hale 4

2 — HARRISBURG 36, YANKTON 22; Ally Hentz 6, Linze Cowman 4

NATIONAL BASKETBALL ASSOC.

Tuesday's Games

Brooklyn 109, Philadelphia 69
Indiana 87, Miami 77
Houston 125, L.A. Lakers 112
Minnesota 108, Atlanta 103
Milwaukee 108, Phoenix 99

Wednesday's Games

Cleveland 89, Atlanta 83
Utah 112, Charlotte 102
Toronto 90, Philadelphia 72
Boston 87, Phoenix 79
Milwaukee 104, Chicago 96
New Orleans 88, Houston 99
Oklahoma City 106, Minnesota 84
San Antonio 108, L.A. Lakers 105
Orlando 80, Denver, 92 p.m.
Memphis at Golden State, 10:30 p.m.
Dallas at L.A. Clippers, 10:30 p.m.

Thursday's Games

New York at Indiana, 7 p.m.

Dallas at Sacramento, 9 p.m.

Miami at Portland, 9:30 p.m.

Friday's Games

Charlotte at Toronto, 6 p.m.
Houston at Boston, 6:30 p.m.
Utah at Atlanta, 6:30 p.m.
Phoenix at Brooklyn, 6:30 p.m.
San Antonio at Memphis, 7 p.m.
Minnesota at New Orleans, 7 p.m.
Chicago at New York, 7 p.m.
Detroit at Milwaukee, 7:30 p.m.
Cleveland at Denver, 8 p.m.
Portland at Golden State, 9:30 p.m.
Oklahoma City at L.A. Lakers, 9:30 p.m.

STANDINGS: Cortrust Bank 3-0, Team Ramrod 2-1, Kobe Dtd 1-2, Conkling Distributing 1-2, Home Federal Bank 1-3.

TRANSACTIONS

BASEBALL

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE — Suspended Houston 2B Jonathan Singleton 50 games after a second violation of the Minor League Drug Prevention and Treatment Program for a drug of abuse.

National League

LOS ANGELES DODGERS — Agreed to terms with RHP Matt Palmer, C Eliezer Alfonzo, C Ramon Castro, INF Alfredo Amezaña, INF Brian Barden, INF Omar Luna, INF Dallas McPherson and OF Jeremie (Jeremy) Moore on minor league contracts.

MILWAUKEE BREWERS — Assigned RHP Arceio Leon outright to Nashville.

PITTSBURGH PIRATES — Traded OF Quincy Lattimore to Cleveland for RHP Jeanmar Gomez.

Frontier League

DECLARED RHP Jonathan Koutis a free agent.

GATEWAY GRIZZLIES — Named Zach Borowick hitting coach, signed INF Vladimir Frias to a contract extension.

JOLIET SLAMMERS — Named Eric Coleman pitching coach and Dave Garcia hitting coach.

RIVER CITY RASCALS — Traded RHP Tony Marsala to Wichita (AA) for future considerations. Received 3B Steve Carrillo from Wichita for a player to be named.

ROCKFORD RIVERHAWKS — Signed LHP Andrew Armstrong, RHP Cody Hallahan, C Greg Van Horn and INF Trevor Whyte to contract extensions and RHP Jon Gulbransen.

BASKETBALL

National Basketball Association

NBA — Suspended N.Y. Knicks' Carmelo Anthony one game for con-

AREA CALENDAR

Thursday, January 10

BASKETBALL, BOYS'

Bloomfield at Bon Homme; Harrington at Homer, Irene-Wakonda at Centerville; Marty at Flandreau Indian; Santee at Allen; Scotland at Avon; Viborg-Hurley at Gayville-Volin; Wagner at Parkston

BASKETBALL, GIRLS'

Waterforn at YHS (7:30 p.m., KYNT-AM, KVHT-FM); Big Sioux Conf. at Beresford and Canton (Beresford, Dakota Valley, Elk Point-Jefferson); Bon Homme vs. Mount Vernon-Plainkanton at Mount Vernon; Bridgewater-Emerly at Menno; Freeman at Marton; Harrington at Homer, Irene-Wakonda at Centerville; Lennox at Vermillion (KYVT-AM); Marty at Flandreau Indian; Parker at Hanson; Platte-Geddes at Andes Center; Santee at Allen; Viborg-Hurley at Gayville-Volin; Wagner at Parkston

BASKETBALL, GIRLS' JV

Waterforn at YHS (4 p.m.)

BASKETBALL, GIRLS' SOPH

Waterforn at YHS (5:45 p.m.)

BASKETBALL, GIRLS' 9TH

Waterforn at YHS (4 p.m.)

WRESTLING, PREP

Lennox Quad (Alcester-Hudson, Beresford, 5 p.m.); Crofton/Harrington Cedar Catholic at West Holt; Norfolk Catholic at Creighton-Verdigre

Friday, January 11

BASKETBALL, BOYS'

Allen at Bancroft-Rosalie; Laurel-Concord-Colebridge at Creighton; Lennox at Vermillion (KYVT-AM); Marton at Freeman; Menno vs. Bridgewater-Emerly at Bridgewater; Osmond at Harrington; Pierce at Harrington Cedar Catholic; Randolph at Wausa; Scotland at Andes Center; Wymot at Winnebago

BASKETBALL, GIRLS'

Big Sioux Conf. at Beresford and Canton (Beresford, Dakota Valley, Elk Point-Jefferson); Allen at Bancroft-Rosalie; Dakota Christian at Freeman Academy; Emerson-Hubbard at

SEATTLE SEAHAWKS — Placed DE Chris Clemons and PK Steven Hauschka on injured reserve. Signed DE Patrick Chukwurah and PK Ryan Longwell.

NATIONAL HOCKEY LEAGUE

TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS — Fired general manager Brian Burke.

AMERICAN HOCKEY LEAGUE

BRIDGEPORT SOUND TIGERS — Agreed to terms with F Jack Combs and F Chad Costello on contracts through the remainder of the season.

CONNECTICUT WHALE — Signed F T.J. Conley and CB Greg McCoy to reserve/future contracts.

SAN DIEGO CHARGERS — Named Tom Telesco general manager.

Ponca; Laurel-Concord-Colebridge at Creighton; Osmond at Harrington; Pierce at Harrington Cedar Catholic; Randolph at Wausa; Scotland at Andes Center; Tripp-Delmont-Armour at Platte; Wymot at Winnebago

HOCKEY, GIRLS' JV

Mitchell at Yankton (7:30 p.m.)

HOCKEY, PEEWEE

West at Yankton 8 (6 p.m.)

SWIMMING & DIVING, COLLEGE

Morningside at USD (5 p.m.)

WRESTLING, PREP

YHS at Watertown (7:30 p.m.)

WRESTLING, JV

YHS at Watertown (6 p.m.)

Saturday, January 12

BASKETBALL, MEN'S

MMC at Doane (4 p.m., KYNT-AM); Kansas City at USD (7 p.m., KVHT-FM)

BASKETBALL, WOMEN'S

MMC at Doane (2 p.m., KYNT-AM); USD at Kansas City (2 p.m., KVHT-FM)

BASKETBALL, BOYS'

S.F. Lincoln at YHS (3:30 p.m., KVHT.com); Dakota Schoolers Classic at Sioux Falls (Dakota Valley, Platte-Geddes, Viborg-Hurley); Tri-Volley Classic at Alcester (Alcester-Hudson, Centerville, Freeman Academy, Gayville-Volin, Irene-Wakonda, Viborg-Hurley); Creighton at O'Neill; Crofton at Norfolk Catholic; Ponca at Elk Point-Jefferson; Santee at Silver Lake; Tripp-Delmont-Armour at Dakota Christian

BASKETBALL, BOYS' JV

S.F. Lincoln at YHS (noon)

BASKETBALL, BOYS' SOPH

S.F. Lincoln at YHS (1:45 p.m.)

BASKETBALL, BOYS' 9TH

S.F. Lincoln at YHS (3:30 p.m., KYNT-AM, KVTK-AM); Big Sioux Conf. at Dell Rapids (Beresford, Dakota Valley, Elk Point-Jef-

erson); Hanson Classic (Centerville, Parkston, Wagner); Rosebud Shootout at Mission (Marty); Bon Homme at Chamberlain; Corsica-Stockey at Scotland; Tripp-Delmont-Armour at Platte; Wymot at Winnebago

BASKETBALL, GIRLS' JV

YHS at S.F. Lincoln (noon)

BASKETBALL, GIRLS' SOPH

YHS at S.F. Lincoln (1:45 p.m.)

BASKETBALL, GIRLS' 9TH

YHS in YHS, noon; Madison Inv. (Wagner, noon)

HOCKEY, BOYS' JV

Sioux Center at Yankton A (5:30 p.m.)

HOCKEY, PEEWEE

Sioux Center at Yankton A (DH, 4 & 8 p.m.)

SWIMMING & DIVING, COLLEGE

S.D. State at USD (11 p.m.)

TRACK & FIELD, COLLEGE INDOOR

Dordt Inv. (MMC)

WRESTLING, PREP

Battle Creek Inv. (Harrington Cedar Catholic, Laurel-Concord-Colebridge, Ponca, Randolph, Wakefield-Allen); Harrisburg Inv. (Beresford, Dakota Valley, Scotland, Vermillion, 10 a.m.); Jerry Optroski Inv. at Mitchell (Bon Homme, Parkston, Wagner, 11 a.m.); Palmer Inv. (Crofton); Tri-Volley Inv. (Elk Point-Jefferson, Kimball-White Lake-Platte-Geddes, Marion-Freeman, Parker, 10 a.m.); West Holt Inv. (Creighton-Verdigre)

Sunday, January 13

HOCKEY, GIRLS' JV

Waterforn at Yankton (3:15 p.m.)

HOCKEY, PEEWEE

Waterforn at Yankton A (11:45 a.m.); Sioux Center at Yankton B (DH, 10 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.)

F Justin Courtнал from South Carolina (ECHL). Signed F Tyler McNeely and D Eric Baier to professional tryout agreements.

TORONTO MAR