

Unbeaten Crofton Focuses On Day-To-Day

Defending C2 Girls' Basketball Champions Take 24-Game Win Streak Into Mid-State Semifinals

BY JEREMY HOECK
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CROFTON, Neb. — In this small town, population 726, lies one of the state's top girls' basketball teams, which finds itself undefeated and riding a 24-game winning streak.

Of course, there's not much discussion of that within the Crofton Lady Warriors themselves.

"Honestly, I don't think we even talk about it," senior guard Tiffany Tramp said this week. "It's not really an option for us."

Defending state champion Crofton (17-0), which plays Guardian Angels Central Catholic in the Mid-State Conference Tournament semifinals tonight (Thursday) in Norfolk, has won 39 of its past 41 games.

The last loss? Almost a full calendar year ago, Feb. 9, 2012, to Norfolk Catholic.

"Can't really complain," sophomore Allison Arens said. "It's been about what we hoped it would be so far."

And yet, even with four regular season games remaining, Crofton could be in position yet again for a deep post-season run. The Lady Warriors rank No. 2 in power points in Class C2, a tenth of a point behind Hershey (14-3).

The focus, instead, for coach Aaron Losing's squad is day-to-day progression, he said this week by phone from Crofton High School.

"We've done a good job of continuing small improvements every day in practice," he said. "The girls off our bench are showing good improvement, which is great to see."

"Those things have been important for us."

Sure, the Lady Warriors graduated three seniors from last year's state Class C2 championship roster, but they returned a bulk of that experience and added a transfer — Quinn Wragge (So.), who has cracked the starting lineup.

There was plenty of optimism for this season, but still plenty of motivation.

"Right now, we're still trying to figure out how good can we be," senior Bridget Arens, a University of South Dakota recruit, said. "We're getting pushed to our limit, which is a good thing. It keeps you honest and keeps you motivated."

The Lady Warriors already boast three signature wins this season — they handed Guardian Angels (D1) its only loss, beat defending D2 champion Wynot and gave Pierce (C1) its only loss.

Even while moving along all season without a hiccup, the Lady Warriors have steadily improved in key areas, Losing said, pointing to the offense.

"We're a little more explosive offensively right now, the girls understand our plays better; play together better every game," he said. "We've shown good improvement."

Bridget Arens leads the team in scoring (16.9 ppg) and is second in rebounding (5.2), while sister Allison averages 13.5 points, 4.9 assists, 3.1 rebounds and 2.8 steals per game.

Sophomore Maria Wortmann contributes 4.2 points and 7.7 rebounds, while sophomore transfer Quinn Wragge averages 6.8 points and 4.7 rebounds. The other starter, Tramp, adds 7.1 points and 2.6 assists.

Off the bench for the Lady Warriors

have been Katie Petersen (2.5 ppg), Alex Allen (2.4), Breanna Allen (2.0), Olivia Monaghan (1.4), Allison Tramp (1.3), Lily Steffen (1.1) and Amy Mueller (0.7).

Defensively, Crofton has transitioned from strictly man-to-man into "more variety," Losing said, referencing more traps.

Ask the players what makes this team especially dangerous, beyond schemes and stats, and you'll hear a case study in chemistry.

"I think it's our ability to work together and our friendship," Allison Arens said. "Our coach has a big part of it, too; he does a good job."

Added Tiffany Tramp, "Our team unity and our work ethic, those are the strengths. We all have a lot of experience together. That just gives you that

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SDSU Women Build On Summit Lead

Jackrabbits Extend League Lead To Two Games, Complete Sweep Of USD

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VERMILLION — South Dakota State completed the regular season sweep over USD with a 63-55 victory in front of a fired-up DakotaDome crowd on Wednesday night while jumping out to a comfortable lead in the Summit League standings.

The Coyotes could have tied SDSU for first in the conference with a win, but USD could not pull even with the Jackrabbits as the second half wound down.

"It was a good tough win," Jackrabbits head coach Aaron Johnston said. "USD is very good and will be there at the end — they play very hard and physical and defend well. For us to come down here and play as well as we did is a good sign."

THE SUMMIT LEAGUE				
	W	L	Per	GB
S.D. State (16-6)	8	1	.889	—
S. DAKOTA (11-11)	6	3	.667	2
IUPUI (11-9)	5	3	.625	2.5
Omaha* (14-6)	4	4	.500	3.5
W. Illinois (10-11)	3	5	.375	4.5
Fort Wayne (7-13)	3	5	.375	4.5
N.D. State (7-13)	3	5	.375	4.5
Kansas City (7-14)	3	5	.375	4.5
Oakland (8-12)	2	6	.250	5.5
Tuesday, January 29				
Chicago State 56, Western Illinois 54				
Wednesday, January 30				
South Dakota State 63, South Dakota 55				
Thursday, January 31				
Omaha at Fort Wayne, 6 p.m.				
North Dakota State at Kansas City, 7 p.m.				
Saturday, February 2				
Omaha at Oakland, 1 p.m.				
South Dakota State at Kansas City, 2 p.m.				
IUPUI at Western Illinois, 4:30 p.m.				
North Dakota State at South Dakota, 7 p.m.				

boards," Williams added. "We can't take any nights off. There is a lot of parity (in the Summit League) and we can not take anything for granted."

With the victory, SDSU (16-6) takes a two game lead in league play which is essentially a three game edge since they have the tiebreaker over second-place USD.

The Jackrabbits, who have now won 31 of the past 34 meetings between these two squads, were led by sophomore Megan Waytashek's 18 points. Senior Ashley Eide, who scored a game-high 22 points in the first meeting between the teams — a 72-60 Jackrabbit victory on January 6, finished with 15 points and six rebounds. Gabrielle Boever added 10 points on 80 percent shooting. Yankton native Chloe Cornemann came off the bench for 12 minutes and did not attempt a shot but did grab three offensive rebounds.

Tempestt Wilson led the Coyotes with 15 points and five rebounds, as the senior has now



South Dakota's Tempestt Wilson doesn't let a Jackrabbit defender stop her drive to the basket early in the first period of play Wednesday night. Wilson scored 15 points for the Coyotes, but South Dakota State came away with a 63-55 victory.

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USD Men Look To Continue Success Against In-State Rival

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VERMILLION — Since a 30-point loss in Brookings last year, the University of South Dakota men's basketball team has handed its rivals to the north two consecutive losses.

Now, the challenge is this for the Coyotes: Can they do it at Frost Arena in front of a large and loud crowd against them?

"Hopefully we don't get things in our head, that 'Wow, it's sold out,'" USD junior center Trevor Gruis said of the 7 p.m. South Dakota Showdown Series matchup tonight (Thursday) in Brookings.

"Obviously for the sake for everybody involved, I hope the outcome is a lot different."

The first Division I meeting between the two schools, last January, was completely controlled by the Jackrabbits — 86-56.

In that game, spurred on by their fans, the Jackrabbits got out quickly and never took their foot off the gas. An ugly first half turned into a 29-point halftime deficit and things never got better for USD.

Since then, however, the Coyotes (8-13, 4-5) have used their own home court advantage to defeat the Jackrabbits (16-6, 7-2), including a 74-71 thriller nearly a month ago.

Naturally, that brings confidence to USD, and it also helps — Gruis pointed out — that the Coyotes have four players among the top eight who have yet to play inside Frost Arena, where the Jackrabbits have won 26 straight.

"By now, I'm used to playing in big games, but I'm not sure that all the kids have played in front of something like this," Gruis said. "Players say all the time that chants and crowd stuff doesn't get to you, but it has some effect on you."

"Hopefully we're all used to it by now."

For SDSU, the tides have turned in the right direction since that loss in Vermillion. The Jackrabbits — ranked No. 18 in this week's mid-major poll — have won five straight to tie North Dakota State for second in the league standings.

With an RPI of 60 and in a solid spot to earn a BracketBusters TV game, the Jacks are, of course, led by senior point guard Nate Wolters (21 ppg, 5.9 rpg, 5.7 apg).

"He makes everyone around him so much better, that's the thing about Nate," Gruis said.

The trio of junior Jordan Dykstra (12.8 ppg, 6.8 rpg), Brayden Carlson (9.0 ppg) and senior Tony Fiegen (10.5 ppg, 5.7 rpg) have also started every game this season for SDSU.

"They can all stretch you out' play five out, and that's hard to play with our zone," Gruis said. "They shoot it very well, and they're well rounded. Anyone can give you 20 (points) on that team."

But again, it's not just the play of the Jackrabbits on the court that makes playing in Frost such a challenge, according to Gruis.

"I don't think some of the guys knew quite how big it was," he said. "We were out there an hour before the game (last year) shooting around, and the students were already chanting at our guys. We weren't ready for that."

What USD is ready for, however, is a 3-game win streak against the Jacks and a solid defensive performance. The Coy-

Morningside Holds Off DWU, Briar Cliff Rolls Past Doane In GPAC Action

SIOUX CITY, Iowa — Sixth-ranked Morningside used a strong second half to avoid an upset bid by Dakota Wesleyan, beating the Tigers 78-71 in Great Plains Athletic Conference women's basketball action on Wednesday.

The game was tied at 36 at the half.

Shelby Beaudette scored 18 points, and Ashlynn Muhl and

Hanna Blum had 14 points each for Morningside (21-4, 13-3 GPAC). Blum also had nine rebounds, while Muhl had six steals. Jessica Tietz added 10 points in the win.

For DWU (17-8, 8-7 GPAC), Kim Johnson led the way with 19 points and nine rebounds. Katie Johnson and Amanda Hart each had 16 points. Celeste Beck added 10 points.

NO. 10 BRIAR CLIFF 106, DOANE 69: SIOUX CITY, Iowa — Tenth-ranked Briar Cliff turned up for its matchup at Mount Marty on Saturday with a 106-69 victory over Doane in GPAC women's basketball action on Wednesday at the Flannigan Center.

Briar Cliff led 50-19 at the break. The Chargers finished with 32 steals and forced 40 turnovers.

Lexi Henschke had 24 points and eight rebounds, Stone Masters scored 12 points, Regan Cooper scored 11 points and Jordan

Sanger had five steals off the bench for Briar Cliff (20-5, 11-4 GPAC). Among the Charger starters, Sara Reeves had 14 points and six steals, and Avon native Kela Cihak had six points and four steals.

Savannah Lohmeier scored 14 points, Heather Broman netted 11 points and Hannah Dostal had 10 points and five steals for Doane (5-19, 0-16 GPAC).

NO. 11 NORTHWESTERN 71, DORDT 67: ORANGE CITY, Iowa — Kendra DeJong and Alli Dunkelberger each scored 18 points to lead

11th-ranked Northwestern past Dordt in GPAC women's basketball action on Wednesday.

Mackenzie Small added 14 points for Northwestern (16-6, 10-5 GPAC). Paige O'Neill added six assists in the win.

For Dordt (13-13, 7-9 GPAC), Kayla Broekhuis led the way with 17 points. Kara Van Dyke had 13 points, Brianna Spronk netted 11 points and Beresford native Elise Maresh added 10 points for the Defenders.

Briar Cliff Men Upset No. 16 Doane

SIOUX CITY, Iowa — Taylor Murren scored a game-high 27 points to lead Briar Cliff to an 87-78 victory over No. 16 Doane in GPAC men's basketball action on Wednesday.

Turner Fahey scored 15 points and Jake Shipley had 14 points for Briar Cliff (17-8, 8-7 GPAC), which travels to Mount Marty on Saturday.

For Doane (21-5, 11-5 GPAC), Conner Beranek went 9-10 from the field, including 3-3 from outside, to finish with 24 points and 10 rebounds. Shavontae Samuels had 20 points and six assists. Nick Reed added 13 points and eight rebounds for the Tigers.

NEBRASKA WESLEYAN 77, CONCORDIA 67: SEWARD, Neb. — Nebraska Wesleyan outscored Concordia 46-34 in the second half to claim a 77-67 victory over the Bulldogs in GPAC men's basketball action on Wednesday.

Concordia (6-17, 2-13 GPAC) led 33-13 at the break, thanks to 500 shooting from the field (14-28). NWU shot .577 (15-26) from the field, including hitting all four three-point attempts, in the second half to steal the victory.

Jonah Bradley shot 4-5 from three-point range, finishing with a game-high 24 points for NWU (10-11, 5-11 GPAC). Eric Jackson scored 11 points and Sass Karemae added 10 points in the victory.

Beau Smith led Concordia with 18 points and seven rebounds. Joel Haywood scored 16 points, Max Wegener had 13 points and Charles Dunbar added five assists in the effort.

MORNINGSIDE 90, DAKOTA WESLEYAN 86: SIOUX CITY, Iowa — The Morningside Mustangs denied Dakota Wesleyan a chance to go over .500 on the season and in GPAC play, claiming a 90-86 decision on Wednesday.

Danny Rudeen went 14-17 from the field to score a game-high 34 points for Morningside (12-14, 7-9 GPAC). Tanner Ferguson hit five three-pointers on the way to 17 points. Tanner Miller had 12 points, Kyle Nikkel had 10 points and Trent Miller added 10 assists in the victory.

For DWU (12-13, 7-8 GPAC), Mike Lee and Kris Menning each had 20 points, with Menning going 5-9 from three-point range. Jalen Voss had 19 points and a game-high 17 rebounds. Aireus Stephenson had 14 points and Luke Bamberg had 12 rebounds for the Tigers.

OKLAHOMA STATE 78, IOWA STATE 76: STILLWATER, Okla. (AP) — Marcus Smart scored 21 points and led the winning layup with 3.1 seconds left to lift Oklahoma State to a 78-76 victory against Iowa State on Wednesday night.

Smart zipped back and forth beyond the free throw line trying to lose Iowa State's Will Clyburn before knifing into the lane and releasing a runner over Georges Niang that banked off the glass and in for the Cowboys (14-5, 4-3 Big 12).

Tyrus McGee missed a desperation 3-pointer at the buzzer for the Cyclones (14-6, 4-3), who had two chances in a wild final few seconds. For a moment, it appeared Chris Babb would have a chance at two free throws to tie it up with less than a second left before officials huddled and ruled that Iowa State should instead get the ball out of bounds.

SECOND AT SNOWFOX MEET



The Vermillion Area Swim team took 2nd place in the recent Snowfox Swim Meet in Sioux Falls, walking away with 18 first place finishes in various events. Members of VAST who attended the meet and helped achieve the 2nd place finish include (front) Rebekah Sharples-Schmidt, Kristy Muriuki, Douglas Sharples-Schmidt, Andrew Sharples-Schmidt, (middle) Lexie Mallimanek, Maddie Lavin, Annika Holdhusen, Fatma Alemam, Basmala Alemam, Hunter Lavin, Brady Martinez, (back) VAST Head Coach Mike Moran, Madisen Martinez, Jacob Krier, Kyleigh Moran, Anna Van Holland, Toria Andre, Megan Muriuki, and VAST Coach Melanie Mahowald. Not pictured is Anna Hackemer.

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