

Coyotes Open Track & Field Season Today

USD Men Look For Third Straight Summit League Title

BY JEREMY HOECK

jeremy.hoeck@yankton.net

VERMILLION — The quest for a third consecutive Summit League indoor crown begins this weekend for the University of South Dakota men's track and field team.

Thing is, even despite being picked second in the pre-season poll, the Coyotes know what it takes to reach the top.

"Realistically, we think we can compete for a title again," said Snyder, a Lake Andes native who is the reigning conference champion in the shot put.

The Coyote men and women — who were also tabbed second in the pre-season poll — begin their indoor season at the Holiday Inn Invitational today (Friday) and Saturday in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Each USD squad returns individual champions from last season, but it's on the men's side where the Coyotes

are especially experienced: They bring back a league-high four returning champs, as well as three of four runners on the first-place 1600-meter relay squad.

"Before, we were on the outside trying to get to the top, but now we're there," said Snyder, who redshirted the outdoor season last spring. "We're the gold standard for the Summit League right now."

The conference will see a small shakeup this year, though, as Oral Roberts — traditionally a successful track school — returns to the Summit League.

"They're really good in some certain events, like the sprints and vaulting," USD men's coach Dave Gottsleben said. "The league is certainly different than what it was."

The Summit League Indoor Championships will be held Feb. 27-28 in Fargo, North Dakota.

Here is a look at each Coyote squad, heading into the season:

Men's Preview

In terms of what returns for USD from last year's indoor title, the Coyotes return 14 athletes who recorded a top-5 finish at the league meet — where they tied with North Dakota State for first place.

Gone for USD, though, are standouts Jeff Mettler and Brandon Kovash, both of whom won two league indoor titles.

"When you lose Jeff Mettler and Brandon Kovash, you certainly lose some points, but we've got a good group coming back," Gottsleben said.

Among those back are two others who won indoor titles, Mach Dojiok (800-meter run) and Teivaskie Lewin (60-meter hurdles). The trio of Erik Hill, Lukas Bernard and Christian Nielsen also return to the indoor 1600-meter squad, which is likely to feature Lewin as the fourth runner, according to Gottsleben.

It's in the throws, though, where

USD could be in for a record-breaking performance. Two of them, to be exact.

Snyder and fellow senior Kyle McKelvey (Beresford) are back for another assault on their own records in the shot put. The in-state duo will both compete this indoor season, while McKelvey will redshirt in the outdoor campaign.

"Indoors is their last hurrah together," Gottsleben said.

Snyder broke the league and school record with a toss of 59-foot-11 3/4 at the league indoor meet a year ago, while McKelvey tied the previous league record in finishing second.

"When we're at practice every day, you could have a down day and he has a good day, and it's a little frustrating," Snyder said, with a chuckle. "Every day's a competition."

To contend for another league title, the Coyotes will again have to rely on their depth — not just their standouts.

Seven other athletes are back from top-5 finishes at last year's league in-

door meet: Brant Haase (3rd, 5000-meter run; 4th, mile), Nielsen (2nd, 200; 3rd, 400); Jeff O'Connell (4th, 200), Jack Thony (5th, 200), Tyler Frank (2nd, high jump), Josh Petersen (3rd, heptathlon) and Conner Fitzsimons (3rd, triple jump).

Ten seniors will provide quality leadership to a rather experienced squad, Gottsleben said.

"We have a couple injuries we're working through, but we've got a really nice senior group," he said.

Women's Preview

The Coyote women, meanwhile, are looking to make a run at a Summit League title after finishing second in the indoor meet and third outdoors a year ago.

Helping in that goal is the return of standouts Megan Glisar and Emily Grove, both of whom won a conference indoor title but redshirted in the outdoor season.

TRACK | PAGE 7A

Coyote Women Bounce Bison

BY JEREMY HOECK

jeremy.hoeck@yankton.net

VERMILLION — In a prelude to an early but critical conference test, the University of South Dakota women's basketball team again used a fast start to build an early lead.

And again, displayed its balance in eclipsing 80 points.

With six players in double figures and 21 points from their reserves, the Coyotes beat first-place North Dakota State 84-69 in Thursday night's Summit League matchup at the DakotaDome.

online

Video From The Coyotes After Their Win Over NDSU. yankton.net

Before they could turn their attention to Saturday's home game with South Dakota State, the Coyotes (13-4, 3-1) sought an early spark against the Bison — who owned a victory over SDSU.

"That's something we take pride in, coming out and throwing the first punch," said senior Raeshel Contreras, who scored 17 points.

It took the Coyotes all of two and a half minutes to build a double-digit lead.

And by the 5:28 mark of the first half, the margin was 20, at 36-16.

"We talk all the time about the first five minutes being so critically important, and I thought our kids came out aggressive," head coach Amy Williams said.

And if it wasn't for Brooke LeMar's 15 points in the first half, USD's 44-26 halftime cushion would have been greater.

The Bison — aided by a switch to a zone defense — got to within 72-63 with 3:49 to play, but Crofton, Nebraska native Bridget Arens made the first of her three straight baskets to push the lead.

From there, time just ran out on NDSU (7-10, 3-2).

The biggest advantages for the Coyotes were inter-connected: A 40-26 edge in points in the paint and a 21-7 edge in bench points.

Senior Nicole Seekamp added 14 points and nine assists, while junior Tia Hemiller (11), junior Margaret McCloud (11) and senior Lisa Loeffler (10) rounded out the starters in double figures.

Off the bench, though, the Coyotes got 10 points and seven rebounds from Arens, as well as five points from junior Kelly Stewart.

"Everyone can do anything, and our bench, their confidence is up now," Contreras said.

"It just makes things easier, because the defense has to respect that."

In a road game a week ago at Oral Roberts, the Coyote reserves combined for eight points. The result was a 16-point defeat.



ROB NIELSEN/P&D

South Dakota's Margaret McCloud sets up a shot against the North Dakota State Bison Thursday night. USD powered past the Bison 84-69. The Coyotes host South Dakota State on Saturday.

Crofton Girls Crush West Central 78-35

HARTFORD — The Crofton Lady Warriors crossed the border to hand South Dakota Class A third-ranked West Central its first setback of the season, a 78-35 decision in girls' basketball action on Thursday.

Crofton, the top-ranked team and three-time defending champions in Nebraska Class C2, led 63-15 after three quarters.

Monica Arens scored 18 points, and Kelsey Sanger had 15 points and five assists to lead Crofton. Allison Arens posted 10 points and five assists. Maria Wortmann had seven rebounds and Lily Steffen had six assists in the victory.

For West Central, Alexa From led the way with nine points.

Crofton, 14-0, now takes on South Dakota's top-ranked Class A program, St. Thomas More, at the Hanson Classic on Saturday in Mitchell. Start time is set for 7 p.m. at the Corn Palace.

West Central, 9-1, travels to Dell Rapids on Tuesday.

CROFTON (14-0)	18	42	63	78
WEST CENTRAL (9-1)	7	13	15	35

Lennox 34, Vermillion 31

VERMILLION — The Lennox Orioles defeated the Vermillion Tanageres on Thursday night by a score of 34-31.

Courtney Weeldreyer led the Orioles scoring attack with 12 points, while Jordan Kruse added nine points and 10 rebounds.

For the Tanageres, Haleigh Melstad scored 13 points, and Toni Gregoire had seven rebounds and four steals.

Next action for the Vermillion will be a matchup with Murray County Central in Garrettsville at 1:30 PM on Saturday. Lennox will host Dakota Valley on Tuesday.

LENNOX (4-5)	9	13	23	34
VERMILLION (4-4)	10	14	21	31

Freeman 61, Marion 42

MARION — Freeman picks up their seventh win of the season with a 61-42 victory over Marion.

Cailey Roth totaled 13 points, nine rebounds and six steals for the Flyers. Erika Sage scored a game-high 17 points, while Josie Fuhrmann had 10 points.

For Marion, Kaitlyn Engbrecht had 10 points and six steals. Devin Nelson and Liz Davis each scored eight points for Marion.

GIRLS | PAGE 7A

Gazelles Shine In Home Finale



JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

Yankton's Sophie Bisgard competes on the vault during a home dual with Wagner-Bon Homme in gymnastics action on Thursday. The Gazelles scored a season-best 133.35 to win the dual.

BY EMILY NIEBRUGGE

sports@yankton.net

The Yankton gymnastics squad is moving in the right direction after Thursday's much-needed win against Wagner-Bon Homme.

The Gazelles claimed a 133.35 victory against Wagner-Bon Homme (128.8), and Yankton sophomore Haleigh Diede won the all-around with 33.95 points at the Summit Activities Center.

"This was a better night for us. We've been in a downward spiral for a while," said Yankton's head coach Luke Youmans following Thursday's competition. "It was the perfect night to do it in our gym, and this will move us in the right direction."

Wagner-Bon Homme managed to take the top two finishes in bars with eighth grader Emily Duffek (8.35) and Hannah Fleming (8.2). Yankton dominated the beam, with Diede (8.8), Kaitlin Guthmiller (8.55) and Sophie Bisgaard (8.45) claiming the top three spots.

Wagner-Bon Homme did put two gymnasts in the top three on the floor — Flemming (8.8) and Krista Dvorak (8.7) in second and third — while Diede finished in first (9.15). Gazelle Cameryn Specht tied first place with Wagner-Bon Homme's Rachel Dion on the vault with 8.6 points, followed by Wagner-Bon Homme's Adrian Weber and Flemming in third with 8.5 points.

"We started out our season strong, but we've been facing

some injuries after Christmas break," said Wagner-Bon Homme's head coach Cherie Petry. "With so many competitions back-to-back, it will be nice to have a nine-day break to really be able to practice again. We just need to get better on the beam."

With the state competition roughly one month away, Diede said Yankton will have to continue to build on their performance from Thursday.

"Looking forward we have to do what we did tonight," she said. "We've really improved, and the scores show that."

With the win under their belt, Youmans said the rest of the season will be a chance to work on the goals the Gazelles have set for their season.

"Our motto is 'progress, not perfection,'" he said. "Tonight was the springboard for that — we saw progress. We aren't competing at a high level yet, but we just need to get out and compete. Tonight was about moral victories."

Yankton's junior varsity also took first place over Wagner-Bon Homme 105.55-92.9. Gazelle Lauren Vik claimed the all-around title with 28.15 points, followed by Yankton's Cheyenne Crisman (24.05) and Wagner-Bon Homme's Megan Merkwon in third with 22.8 points.

You can follow Emily Niebrugge on Twitter at twitter.com/ENiebrugge. Discuss this story at yankton.net.

Wrestling: Norfolk Catholic Downs Creighton 44-30

CREIGHTON, Neb. — Norfolk Catholic scored two pins and a technical fall on the way to a 44-30 victory over Creighton in prep wrestling action on Thursday.

Will Ablar (106) and Jacob Breed (145) won by pin for the victorious Knights. Nic Breed scored a technical fall victory at 132 pounds in the win.

For Creighton, Conner Hazen (113), Garret Zimmerman (120) and Ean Stacken (170) won by pin.

105 — Will Ablar NC pin, Corbin Schellmeyer 4:45; 113 — Conner Hazen C pin, Justin Birtak 3:30; 120 — Garret Zimmerman C pin, Alec Seymour 2:38; 126 — Zachary Hazen C dec, Jonah Hang 7-1; 132 — Nic Breed NC tech, fall Kurt Wortman 22-7; 138 — Dillon Hubb NC dec, Levi Stacken 11-5; 145 — Jacob Breed NC pin, Brady Wortman 2:43; 152 — Christian Prim NC by forfeit; 160 Connor Baldwin C dec, Avery Alder 5-3; 170 — Ean Stacken C pin, Marcus Teten 1:35; 182 — Logan Hale NC by forfeit; 195 — Riley McCarthy NC by forfeit; 220 — Aaron Hoff NC by forfeit; 285 — Austyn Larsen C by forfeit.

Sioux Valley Quad

VOLGA — Garretson went 3-0 in a wrestling quadrangular hosted by Sioux Valley on Thursday.

Garretson beat Sioux Valley 60-15, Warner-Northwestern 51-6 and Alcester-Hudson 48-18. Sioux Valley went 2-1, topping Warner-Northwestern 36-24 and Alcester-Hudson 48-33. Alcester-Hudson beat Warner-Northwestern 36-15 in the other match.

Boys: Beckmann, O'Brien Power Bees Past Bon Homme

TYNDALL — Bloomfield was able to gain a win on the road as they beat Bon Homme with a score of 59-47.

Cody Beckmann and Quinn O'Brien led the way for Bloomfield scoring 23 and 15 points respectively. Beckmann also led with seven rebounds for his team.

For the home side, Hunter Young put up 18 points and had seven rebounds.

Bloomfield will be on the road against Plainview tonight (Friday), and Bon Homme will play at Chamberlain on Saturday.

BLOOMFIELD (5-7)	21	32	48	59
BON HOMME (1-7)	12	27	36	47

Santee 60, Allen 12

ALLEN, Neb. — Santee picked up a road victory with a 60-12 victory over Allen. Coleman Knieff scored a team-high six points for Allen, and Austin Klug led the team in rebounds with five.

No stats available for Santee.

BOYS | PAGE 7A