

USD Assistant Larsen Named Head Coach At S.D. Mines

BY JEREMY HOECK
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Ryan Larsen had sought a climb up the coaching ladder. It was just a matter of finding a good fit.

One that was close to his home town made it all the better.

Larsen, who has spent the past five seasons as an assistant at the University of South Dakota, was hired Wednesday as head coach at South Dakota School of Mines.

"The past two years, I've really felt comfortable in my abilities to lead my own program," Larsen said Wednesday evening from Rapid City, where was formally introduced.

"Ryun and Amy — current and former USD coaches —

both challenged me to think like a head coach; they give me responsibilities that would help me down the road."

Now Larsen has his chance.

A native of Spearfish, he becomes just the third head coach in the 37-year history of the S.D. Mines women's program.

Previous coach Barb Felderman, whose contract was not renewed, guided the Lady Hardrockers to a 474-397 record in her long tenure in Rapid City. She led the program to 11 conference titles (last in 2005) and nine NAIA National Tournament berths (last in 2005).

If there was going to be a next stop in his coaching career, Mines was on the short list, Larsen said.

"I'm pretty picky. There are only a few spots I'd ever really look at going to," he said. "It was important where I live, and I wanted to be at a good place, which I feel Mines is."

"I had a great situation at USD, and I was never going to leave for a bad job."

Larsen helped lead the Coyotes to a 95-63 record and three consecutive post-season tournament berths in his tenure on the bench — four under former coach Ryun Williams and last season with Amy Williams.

In Larsen's final season in Vermillion, USD surged down the stretch to a 19-16 overall record and lost to rival South Dakota State by three points in the Summit League championship game.



BRAD BLUME/SD MINES

Ryan Larsen (center) is introduced as the new Lady Hardrockers women's basketball head coach. With Larsen are the Hardrockers Athletics Director Dr. Dick Kaiser (left) and S.D. School of Mines President, Dr. Heather Wilson. Larsen is just the third coach of the School of Mines women's basketball program in its 37-year history.

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Legion Baseball Showdown



JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

ABOVE: Yankton shortsop Mitch Gullikson tags out Brandon Valley's Jacob Adams, 23, during their American Legion baseball matchup on Wednesday at Riverside Field. BELOW: Yankton pitcher Landon Withrow sends the ball home during First Dakota Post 12's American Legion baseball matchup with Brandon Valley on Wednesday at Yankton's Riverside Field.

BV Downs Post 12

Yankton, 10-16, Heads To Gopher Classic This Weekend

Brandon Valley rallied from an early 3-0 deficit to beat Yankton First Dakota Post 12 10-5 in American Legion baseball action on Wednesday at Yankton's Riverside Field.

Jacob Adams had two hits, including a home run, for Brandon Valley.

For Yankton, Andrew Hummel had a triple, a single and a RBI. Lane Sawatzke drove in two runs in the effort.

Luke Bauske picked up the win in relief for Brandon Valley.

Landon Withrow took the loss, pitching seven innings for Yankton.

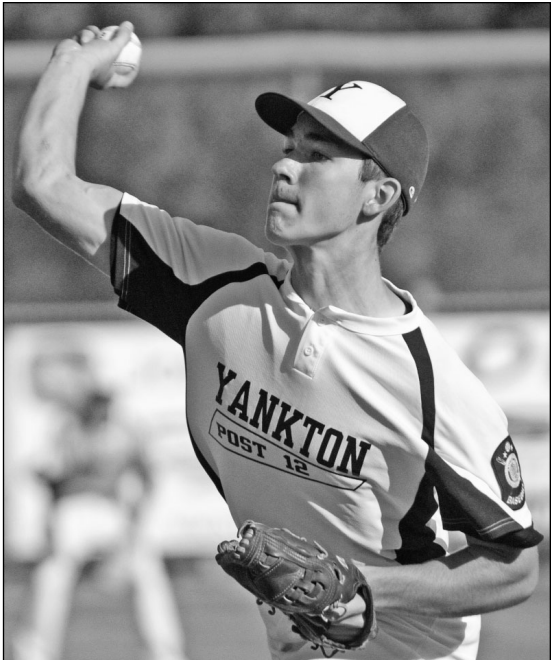
Yankton, now 10-16 overall and 2-6 in region play, leaves today (Thursday) for the Minneapolis area for the 2013 Gopher Classic. Post 12 is in the Apple Valley bracket, and will open against West Fargo, N.D., on Friday at 4:30 p.m.

Pool play continues on Saturday and Sunday. Yankton plays Coon Rapids, Minn., and Rosetown, Minn., on Saturday,

and Mankato, Minn., National and Apple Valley, Minn., on Sunday.

The tournament has 75 teams, with the semifinals and championship set for Tuesday in Minnetonka, Minn. The field also includes Watertown, Rapid City Post 22, Sioux Falls East, West and Post 307; Huron, Mitchell, Brandon Valley and Brookings.

Besides several teams from North and South Dakota, and Minnesota, there are teams from Montana, Wyoming, Illinois, Wisconsin, Nebraska and Missouri, and Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba in Canada.



Alexandria, S.F. Brewers Top Amateur Baseball Poll

WATERTOWN — Alexandria and the Sioux Falls Brewers continue to lead their respective divisions this week in the South Dakota amateur baseball poll.

Alexandria is No. 1 in Class B and the Brewers No. 1 in Class A

Here is the complete poll:

- Class A — 1. Sioux Falls Brewers; 2. Renner Monarchs; 3. Sioux Falls Saints; 4. Yankton; 5. (Tie) Pierre and Vermillion Red Sox.
- Class B — 1. Alexandria; 2. Crofton, Neb; 3. Dell Rapids PBR; 4. Canova; 5. Parkston Mudcats; 6. Madison; 7. Dimock-Emery; 8. Clark; 9. Salem; 10. Larchwood, Iowa.

Also receiving votes — Wynot (Neb.) and Britton.

Around The Track: Should NASCAR Consider Midweek Races?

BY JENNA FRYER
AP Auto Racing Writer

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — Ahhh, the dog days of summer — and those nights when there's nothing exciting on television.

Four-time NASCAR champion Jeff Gordon believes auto racing could fill that void. Gordon grew up in the "Thursday Night Thunder" era when he raced at tracks that hosted USAC races across the country that were televised on ESPN2.

NASCAR doesn't venture into that territory with the elite Sprint Cup Series, but the addition of Eldora Speedway to the Truck Series will mark three midweek races. The trucks ran on a Thursday night at Kentucky in June, are scheduled to run Wednesday, July 24, at Eldora and Wednesday, Aug. 21, at Bristol.

Gordon thinks maybe it's time for other series to try a midweek date.

"I think when 'Monday Night Football' ends, we should start 'Monday Night Racing,'" Gordon said. "But that's just me. Of course I came from 'Thursday Night Thunder,' and 'Thursday

Night Thunder' was ridiculously successful back in the day."

Alas, Gordon says NASCAR officials have been cold to the idea.

"It seems like every time I talk to NASCAR about doing a weekly race or one midweek, they say 'Oh well if you do it on this day, you won't get as many people coming to the track, so the track suffers, and if you do it on this day, then maybe the track does well but then the people at home won't watch it because of this', so it always seems to be some kind of obstacle," he said.

"I am not saying we need to do it every week, but if we could find the right week in the schedule and mix it up, make it special, and make it make sense for the fans at home as well as the ones that could attend, then I think it would be awesome."

There was a buzz last weekend at Daytona about returning the night race back to its traditional early morning start, when teams were at the track for breakfast and on the beach by lunch. But Gordon believes running the race on July 4, regardless of what day it falls during the week, is a better solution and could start the midweek trend.

"I think July 4th might make sense because everybody is off on that day and looking for something to do," he said. "Of course, we are not off, but I think that is why it could work."

POSITIVE POCONO: For years, about the only thing in NASCAR as popular as Dale Earnhardt Jr. was bashing Pocono Raceway.

The track wasn't safe. The races were too long. The facility was outdated. On and on it went.

But, slowly, the track has won over Sprint Cup drivers with a series of upgrades to the track — everything from additional SAFER barriers to a repave of the 2 1/2-mile surface — that left them raving about the new look the last two years.

Of course, slicing the two Cup races from 500 to 400 miles in 2012 certainly helped.

Pocono Raceway CEO and president Brandon Igdalsky has led the push for the overdue makeover.

"I got tired of people talking bad about us, plain and simple," he said. "If you have drivers and people in the industry that aren't talking positive, that translates to what the fans hear and how they react. Last year, drivers started talking about how great things here are now. It changes the mentality of the fans."

Igdalsky's latest gamble appears to have paid off: He brought the IndyCar Series back to Pocono after a 24-year absence and the first race last Sunday was considered a success. The grandstands weren't completely full, but the estimated crowd of 30,000 did exceed most expectations. Unlike the NASCAR stars, IndyCar drivers didn't have to warm up to Pocono. They loved it from the

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Couples Looks To Break Through In US Senior Open

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Fred Couples feels like he's overdue for a win.

He's played seven events on the Champions Tour this year, has been in the top five in six of them and comes into the U.S. Senior Open on Thursday off three straight runner-up finishes.

"I would like to win something," he said Wednesday, adding that he even came in second in a member-guest tournament in California last month.

Couples' most recent victory was just under a year ago at the 2012 Senior British Open. He looked ready to win two weeks ago in the

Senior Players Championship, but a back-nine collapse left him tied for second behind Kenny Perry.

Couples said his bothersome back is feeling fine, so if the man nicknamed "Boom Boom" for his prodigious drives can find the fairway at Omaha Country Club, no one would be surprised if this is the week he breaks through.

"Fred still hits the ball a tremendous distance," Bernhard Langer said. "He hasn't lost any distance, maybe gained some with the equipment and all that. He's capable of producing very low scores. Whenever he tees up, he's one of the main favorites, no doubt about it."

Couples, Perry, Langer, Tom Watson and David Frost are among the top contenders at the 6,700-yard, par-70 Omaha Country Club.

The fourth of the five senior majors will be a test of stamina for the 50-and-over golfers, especially with weekend highs forecast in the low 90s with high humidity. The course is hilly, featuring elevation and topographical changes that belie the popular image of the central plains.

"Nebraska, you'd think flat and hot," Perry said. "I got the hot part right, but it's the hilliest golf course I've ever been on."

Drives in the fairway will be at a premium with the rough cut high

and the greens small and sloped. The 312-yard 13th hole is drivable, but the course features the second-longest par-3 in U.S. Senior Open history in the 230-yard third hole and the third-longest par-4 in the 494-yard 10th.

The 53-year-old Couples' scaled-back schedule begins to ramp up now. After the U.S. Senior Open, he plays the British Open at Muirfield and Senior British Open at Royal Birkdale in consecutive weeks — "which might be a little much," he said.

For a man with a notoriously bad back, the schedule is taxing, in no small part because of the challenge

the Omaha Country Club presents. Even in the best of circumstances, golfers will find themselves with a good number of side-hill and downhill lies. And then there's that gnarly, 4-inch rough.

"If I drive it in the rough and don't have a great lie, I'm not going to do too much out of it," Couples said. "I'll probably play it safe."

Roger Chapman will try to become the first defending champion to repeat since Allen Doyle in 2006. Chapman, who also won the Senior PGA Championship last year, has not been able to recapture his 2012

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