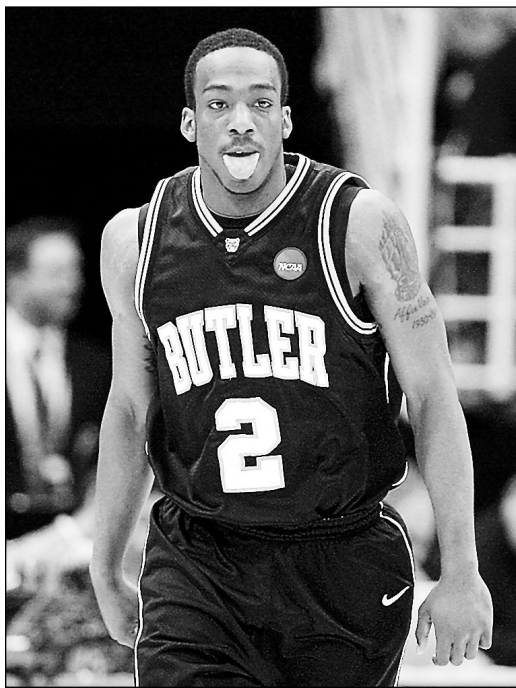


PHOTO OF THE DAY

Hanjin' Around



Butler's Shawn Vanzant sticks his tongue out after hitting a three-pointer against Syracuse during first-half action in the men's NCAA Basketball Tournament in Salt Lake City, Utah, Thursday, March 25. Butler upended the top-seeded Orange 63-59 to advance to the West Regional Final (Travis Heying/Wichita Eagle/MCT)

AREA DIGEST

Jensen Cards Ace

VERMILION — Rusty Jensen, the assistant PGA Golf pro at The Bluffs Golf Course, shot his fifth career hole-in-one during his round on Thursday afternoon. Jensen made the ace on Hole No. 12, hitting the 158-yard shot with a 7-iron.

CBH Sweeps All-Star Games

ALEXANDRIA — The Custer Battlefield Highway Conference teams claimed both the girls' and boys' games in the Cornbelt vs. CBH All-Star Games, held Thursday at Hanson High School. White Lake's Jill Guericke scored 13 points to lead the CBH to a 67-60 victory in the girls' game.

Katie Talbot (Kimball) netted 10 points. Shelby Anderson (Ethan) scored nine points and Shelby Assmus (Stickney-Mount Vernon) added eight points in the win. For the Cornbelt squad, Hanson's Amanda Hart led the way with a game-high 14 points. Kelsey Walloch (Manno) had nine points and Ashley Stelten (Hanson) added eight points in the effort.

In the boys' game, Corsica-Stickney's Kirby Baan Hofmann led five CBH players in double figures with 20 points, leading his squad to a 103-91 victory. Cody Thompson (Mitchell Christian) and Shane Thiry (White Lake) each had 13 points. Matt Nielsen (Mitchell Christian) scored 12 points and Tyson Peters (White Lake) added 10 points in the win.

For the Cornbelt squad, Macon Oplinger (Manno) scored a game-high 26 points to lead the way. Jerico Shape (Canistota) posted 12 points. Brandon Schwans (Bridgewater-Emery) and Will Massey (Menno) each had 11 points in the effort.

Men's 35-Over, Women's Basketball Leagues Still Accepting Teams The Yankton Parks and Recreation Department is still accepting registrations for both the Men's 35 and Over Basketball League and the Women's Basketball League.

Team registration forms and rules are available at the Summit Activities Center at 1801 Summit Street or on the City of Yankton web site at www.cityofyankton.org. For further information, call (605) 668-5234 or stop by the Summit Activities Center at 1801 Summit Street, Yankton, SD.

JDRF Tourney April 10 The annual Juvenile Diabetes Youth Basketball Tourney will be held Saturday, April 10, at the Summit Activities Center. The tournament is open to boys' and girls' teams in grades 5-8. There will be 'A' and 'B' Divisions. Each team is guaranteed three games.

Entry deadline is April 4. For more information, contact Randy Abink at 605-583-4430 or by e-mail at abink5@gwtc.net.

AREA CALENDAR

Friday, March 26 SOFTBALL, COLLEGE Great West Weekend at Farmers Branch, Texas (USD vs. North Dakota, DH, 1 p.m.) TRACK, COLLEGE Alabama Relays (USD) TRACK, PREP Warrior Relays at Creighton (3 p.m.) Saturday, March 27 BASEBALL, COLLEGE MMC at Nebraska Wesleyan (DH, 1 p.m.) BASEBALL, HS CLUB Harrisburg at Yankton (1 p.m.); Beresford at R.C. Central (4 p.m.); Beresford at St. Thomas More (7 p.m.) SOFTBALL, COLLEGE Great West Weekend at Farmers Branch, Texas (USD vs. Utah Valley, DH, 1 p.m.); Doane at MMC (DH, 1 p.m.) TRACK, COLLEGE Alabama Relays (USD) TRACK, PREP Norm Hiernan Indoor at Vermillion (Beresford) Sunday, March 28 BASEBALL, COLLEGE MMC at Doane (DH, 1 p.m.) BASEBALL, HS CLUB SNVFW at Parkston (2 p.m.); Beresford at R.C. Stevens (11 a.m.); Vermillion at Yankton (1 p.m.) SOFTBALL, COLLEGE Great West Weekend at Farmers Branch, Texas (USD vs. Houston Baptist, DH, 11 a.m.) TRACK, COLLEGE Alabama Relays (USD)

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JOEL

From Page 7A

ic department on a higher rung on the D-I ladder. And though other sports at KSU have seen consistent success, perhaps the one without any significant winning tradition is football. Kent State has posted just two winning records since 1987, also the last time the Golden Flashes won at least seven games in a season.

It will be a similar undertaking to the one Nielsen encountered at USD. Upon taking the reins in Vermillion in November 2003, Nielsen jumped head-first into the search for a new football coach — a search that ended 19 days later. That first coach hired by Nielsen was Ed Meierkort, who was tabbed to guide USD's football program — that had one winning season in the seven years prior to 2004. Over the next six seasons, the two men shared similar challenges, Meierkort said Thursday.

"We had to tackle an athletic department and a football program that was a bit defeated, but we came out of the gates blazing," said Meierkort, who has posted a 44-23 record at USD. "Joel was strong enough and savvy enough to give everyone around here guidance, but more than that, support."

That support came in the form of fully-funding the program — 63 scholarships — at the early stages of the D-I transition. USD was 6-5 in 2008, the first outside Division II, and 5-5 last season. "I'm very proud of what we accomplished here," Meierkort said. "Joel gave the football program the freedom to do what we needed to do. He was always a positive influence. His glass was 100 percent half-full."

Dave Gottsleben, who has spent 26 years as the head men's track and field coach, pointed to Nielsen's ability to guide USD through the planning and implementation stages of the D-I move. Then, according to Gottsleben, getting the Coyotes into the Great West Conference was a "great move."

City Bowling

INDUSTRIAL HIGH TEAM GAME: Rent-A-Center 5077 HIGH TEAM SERIES: Rent-A-Center 2444 HIGH INDIVIDUAL GAME: Jimmy Hahn 255, JJ Peterson 245, Ryan Goehner 244, Jerry Peterson 232, Casey Weverstad 222, Jeff Peterson 211, Frank Osborn, Sr. 3, 4-10, 5-7, Lonnie Remington 4-5

MOONSHINERS HIGH TEAM GAME: Dan Liebl 234, Kevin White 216, Ben Schaefer 201, Wendy Wiebehusen 171, Elaine Lane 152, Elaine Lane 44, Deb Caba 414

STANDINGS: Upper Deck 82-26, Northtown Aces 71-57, L&S Electric 19-22, Lucky Strike 17-24, Pin Wizards 14-29, The Spills 10-31, HIGHLIGHTS: Annabelle Moody 3-10, 5-7, Frank Osborn, Sr. 3, 4-10, 5-7, Lonnie Remington 4-5

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SCOREBOARD

Ohio State (29-7) vs. Tennessee (27-8), 30 minutes following... KANSAS CITY REGIONAL Sunday, March 28 At Sprint Center, Kansas City, Mo. Oklahoma (25-10) vs. Notre Dame (29-5), 6:30 p.m. Nebraska (32-1) vs. Kentucky (27-7), 9 p.m.

At Energy Solution Arena, Salt Lake City Butler 63, Syracuse 59 Kansas State 101, Xavier 96, 20T Regional Championship EAST REGIONAL Saturday, March 27 At The Carrier Dome, Syracuse, N.Y. West Virginia (30-6) vs. Kentucky (35-2), 6 p.m.

At Edward Jones Dome, St. Louis Semifinal winners WEST REGIONAL Saturday, March 27 At Energy Solution Arena, Salt Lake City Butler (31-4) vs. Kansas State (29-7), 3:30 p.m.

NATIONAL INVITATIONAL TOURN. Quarterfinals Tuesday, March 23 Mississippi 90, Texas Tech 87, 20T North Carolina 60, UAB 55 Wednesday, March 24 Rhode Island 79, Virginia Tech 72 Dayton 77, Illinois 71 At Madison Square Garden, New York

Semifinals Tuesday, March 30 At University of Dayton Arena, Dayton (23-12), 6 p.m. North Carolina (19-16) vs. Rhode Island (29-9), 6:30 p.m.

COLLEGIANSIDER.COM TOURN. Tuesday, March 23 At Missouri State 67, Creighton 61 Thursday, March 25 Pacific 64, Appalachian State 56 Championship Tuesday, March 30 Pacific (23-11) at Missouri State (23-12), 2B

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Saint Mary's Finds Success After Losing Mills

MORAGA, Calif. (AP) — When practice started back in October, Saint Mary's coach Randy Bennett was still trying to figure out just what kind of team he had. The Gaels had lost perhaps their most dynamic player ever in Patty Mills to the NBA, one of their most productive in Diamon Simpson and four other seniors from a team that fell just short of making the NCAA tournament last season.

Then Bennett watched how well his team played in closed scrimmages against Washington and Nevada and thought the Gaels might take some people by surprise after being picked fourth in the West Coast Conference. "But I still didn't know," Bennett said. "Is Washington bad? That's kind of what I was thinking. Are they down? I wasn't sure."

What Bennett was pretty certain of by the time the season started was that Omar Samhan would be a dominant post presence, Mickey McConnell would be one of the top point guards in the conference. Ben Allen would rebound from a disappointing first season after transferring from Indiana and Matthew Dellavedova would be an impact freshman.

Those four have been the key to success for the Gaels (28-5) this season. Saint Mary's has turned what was expected to be a rebuilding year into one of the best in the school's history as the Gaels have advanced to the NCAA regional semifinals against Baylor (27-7) on Friday night in Houston. And this has all come without Mills, who raised Saint Mary's profile almost immediately after arriving from Australia in 2008, and Simpson, who left the school as the career leader in rebounds and blocked shots.

"It is weird," Allen said. "We still have guys here who care so much about the team and are so unselfish. That's what makes us a great team. Not that those other guys were selfish, but our chemistry is better I think." A team having better success

after losing its best player is not unprecedented. Virginia, for example, made the Final Four in 1984, the year after Ralph Sampson left for the NBA. In football, Tennessee won the national championship the year after losing Peyton Manning to the NFL. The departure of Mills turned the team over to McConnell, who is not as flashy as his predecessor at point guard but is leading the nation in 3-point shooting percentage at 51.7 percent and has more than twice as many assists as turnovers.

"He's the key to our success," Samhan said. "I don't think with other point guards in the past we could have been in the same position we're in, even though we've had some pretty good point guards here in the past." Mills was probably the best, averaging 18.4 points per game last season and putting a bit of a spotlight on a once overlooked program. While praising Mills' impact, Samhan said he thinks the team is better this year because it doesn't revolve around one player. While Samhan is the focal point this year, he frequently points out that he couldn't be having the success he has had without his teammates.

"I just felt like Patty had an agenda for himself," Samhan said. "It really helped me this year, seeing some of the mistakes Patty made as a teammate last year. I didn't want to do that. I'm not going to worry about it there's a scout here tonight. I'm going to play the way it takes for our team to win." "If that scout leaves unsatisfied and we won, I'm OK with it. I don't know if that was always guys' agendas last year, not just Patty, Diamon and those other guys too. I think Patty helped us a lot as a program

obviously. He was a great player. But he was definitely flawed. I don't know if Patty said if we'd be in the Sweet 16." Bennett chuckled when asked if losing Mills made his team better, knowing how well the Gaels played before Mills broke his hand last season. He praised Mills for putting the program where it is today, saying he was one of the big reasons the Gaels went from a 17-win team the year before he arrived to an NCAA tournament the following year and a 28-win team last year that likely would have made it to the tournament had Mills not broken his hand at Gonzaga.

"Because of Pat's departure some other guys have had the opportunity to step up and they have," Bennett said. "That's the best way I could explain it. But I'm not crazy. If we had a pro here with us, I think we'd figure it out." The bigger change this season is that the Gaels almost always have five highly skilled offensive players on the court at the same time. The four starters who surround Samhan have all made at least 40 3-pointers this season, with each of them hitting 38 percent from long range.

With two point guards on the floor who can also shoot in McConnell and Dellavedova, an outstanding passing and shooting big man in Allen, and a 3-point threat in small forward Clint Steindl, the Gaels are a difficult team to defend. "If you double-team Omar, he's such a good passer that he's going to kick it out to all our shooters," McConnell said. "If you play him one-on-one, he's so big and skilled inside, he'll score whenever he wants. It's a tough decision."

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Florida at Ottawa, 6 p.m. N.Y. Islanders at Columbus, 6 p.m. Detroit at Nashville, 7 p.m. Colorado at Phoenix, 8 p.m. Vancouver at San Jose, 9 p.m. Dallas at Los Angeles, 9:30 p.m.

At Energy Solution Arena, Salt Lake City Butler (31-4) vs. Kansas State (29-7), 3:30 p.m. NATIONAL INVITATIONAL TOURN. Quarterfinals Tuesday, March 23 Mississippi 90, Texas Tech 87, 20T North Carolina 60, UAB 55 Wednesday, March 24 Rhode Island 79, Virginia Tech 72 Dayton 77, Illinois 71 At Madison Square Garden, New York

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