

Gazelles Battle Past Lynx To Keep Season Alive



JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D
The Yankton Gazelles bench reacts after Yankton scored during the second half of the District 2AA third place game on Thursday at the Summit Center. Yankton beat Brandon Valley 44-41, and will travel to Sioux Falls O’Gorman on Saturday for the right to go to state.

BY NICK ROBINSON
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The Yankton Gazelles basketball team is one win away from a state tournament berth. The Gazelles (5-15) edged the Brandon Valley Lynx (4-18) 44-41 in the third place game of District 2AA on Thursday night at the Summit Activities Center. With the victory, the Gazelles head to Sioux Falls to take on O’Gorman on Saturday in Region 1AA, with the winner going to the South Dakota State Class AA Girls’ Basketball Tournament, March 7-9 in Rapid City. Seniors Mikala Hora and Kelsey Fitzgerald showed their grit and experience in the hard fought contest. “A win is a win,” Yankton head coach Doug Pesicka said. “That’s the only thing that matters is to

win two games. We did just enough to get the job done.” As the game started, the pressure was lingering onto the players. The teams had 10 turnovers combined to start the game. The Gazelles struggled in the first half to find offensive consistency. Yankton hit their first two shots with 4:25 left in the first quarter. Hora stole a pass from a Lynx defender and dished to a wide-open Fitzgerald for a lay-up. Freshman Becky Frick used a good pump fake to deliver the ball to Fitzgerald, where she cashed in another easy lay-up. Yankton decided to use a four guard line-up, to try and stop the Lynx attack. “It was a matchup situation, we just rotated our guards,” Pesicka said. “We had to go smaller, to counter what they do.”

Brandon Valley took control early in the contest, taking an 11-6 lead into the second quarter. The Lynx used a viscous full-court press to heckle the Yankton players all night. A steal and three-pointer by Val Peltier gave Brandon Valley confidence in the second period. But, Fitzgerald answered right back with a quick dribble move to the basket, cutting the Lynx lead to 14-9. Again, Fitzgerald brought Yankton back to life with a block in the post and a transition lay-up, bringing the game to a 15-13 deficit. Brandon Valley’s Allie Koehn ended a Gazelle run with a contested jumper over junior Whitlee Larson, giving the Lynx a 17-13 lead with just minutes left in the first half. Hora connected on a three-pointer from the baseline to cut

the lead to one (17-16), with only a minute left. With :37 seconds remaining, Becca Long responded to Hora’s three-pointer with one of her own, adding a four point, 20-16 lead for Brandon Valley going into halftime. Koehn led the Lynx at the half with five points, three boards, and a steal in the half. Fitzgerald and Hora led Yankton with seven points in the first half. “At halftime we challenged our kids to be physical,” Pesicka said. “We came out in the second half with some rhythm, compared to none in the first half.” The Yankton Gazelles came out looking like a new team in the second half. From that point on, the Lynx played catch-up until the horn sounded. Yankton started the half on a 7-

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Wynot, Crofton Roll In Openers



JEREMY HOECK/P&D
Wynot's Samantha Wieseler, front, pokes the ball away from Dani Most of Crofton during their Class D2 first-round game Thursday night at the Nebraska State Girls Basketball Tournament at Lincoln East High School.

Lady Blue Devils Open Three-Peat Bid With Win

BY JEREMY HOECK
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LINCOLN, Neb. — From every angle and seemingly every player in blue, the shots from deep were falling for the Wynot Blue Devils. The result was 10 three-pointers and a convincing first-round victory. Thanks to some hot outside shooting and its traditionally harassing defense, Wynot rolled past Giltner 80-53 in Class D2 first round action Thursday night at the Nebraska State Girls Basketball Tournament at Lincoln East High School. What spurred the three-point barrage for Wynot (23-4)? “That’s all us driving and dishing,” said junior Maggie Schulte, who scored 15 points. “That’s our offense. We have trust in every player that they can hit a shot.” The victory advances the Blue Devils to face No. 2 Lindsay Holy Family, 25-1, in today’s (Friday) 3:45 p.m. semifinal game at Persh-

ing Auditorium. If Thursday’s performance was any indication, Wynot should be ready. Six different players hit a three-pointer in the win: Two each for Ashley Heine, Shelby Hochstein, Samantha Wieseler and Zoey Heimes. Schulte and Erica Burbach also drained one from deep. “We work a lot in practice on getting set and shooting quick,” Schulte said. “We did that tonight. We just have to keep it going.” Wynot jumped ahead early 18-8 on five straight points from Schulte and led 23-10 after one quarter. The margin was in double digits for the rest of the way, including 49-30 at halftime. The first quarter was marked by four three-pointers for the Lady Blue Devils and the second quarter saw them score 11 points at the charity stripe.

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BY JEREMY HOECK
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LINCOLN, Neb. — It wasn’t the cleanest game for the state’s only unbeaten team, but in the end, it was another convincing win for the Crofton Lady Warriors. Thirty-two straight victories, at that. The combination of a swarming defense and a quick-starting offense propelled Crofton to a 54-19 rout of North Bend Central in Thursday afternoon’s Class C2 first-round game at the Nebraska State Girls Basketball Tournament at Lincoln East High School. Crofton (25-0) scored the game’s first 15 points, didn’t allow the smaller Tigers a true shot attempt for nearly six minutes and rolled from there — despite missing more than a handful of open jumpers. “It was a little rough out there, but it’s nice that you can overcome it like that,” said sophomore point guard Allison Arens, who posted 15 points and four assists. The defending state champion Lady Warriors move to face No. 5 Homer (24-3) — whom they routed in last Friday’s district final — today (Friday) in the 10:45 a.m. semifinals. First, though, came the matter of dispatching North Bend Central. Crofton did that right away thanks to its defensive press, which led to run-backs the other direction. A Bridget Arens layup and free throw with 1:21 left in the first quarter put the Lady Warriors in front 15-0. “We started knowing they’d front us, so we had to get it inside,” said Bridget Arens, a senior forward who scored 11 points and blocked four shots. “We had a little bit of a rough day on offense, but we still got it done.” Crofton closed the first half on an 8-0 run to lead 29-8 at the break, and North Bend Central didn’t break double digits until there were 24 seconds left in the third quarter. From there, the Lady Warriors relied on reserves to close out the win.

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JEREMY HOECK/P&D
Allison Arens, front, of Crofton steals the ball from Samantha Dirkschneider of North Bend Central during their Class C2 first-round game Thursday afternoon at the Nebraska State Girls Basketball Tournament at Lincoln East High School.

South Dakota Men Roll Past IUPUI 87-69

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Trevor Gruis scored 26 points, helping South Dakota post an 87-69 victory over IUPUI on Thursday night. South Dakota (10-18, 5-10 Summit) also had three other players score in double figures. Juevol Myles had 18 points, Casey Kasperbauer had 13 and Jordan Boots had 11, including three 3-pointers. Myles also had five assists. South Dakota made 20 of 25 free throws, compared to just 4 of 11 for IUPUI (6-24, 1-14).

Mitchell Patton scored 24 points to lead IUPUI. Donovan Gibbs and Sean Esposito scored 12 and Greg Rice had 10. Esposito also had seven assists and Rice collected seven rebounds. S. DAKOTA 87, IUPUI 69 S. DAKOTA (10-18) Flack 2-3 0-0 4, Gruis 10-15 6-6 26, Boots 4-10 0-0 11, Myles 6-14 4-5 18, Kasperbauer 4-11 3-3 13, Tecker 2-3 2-2 6, Bartling 0-1 2-4 2, Rowson 2-2 3-5 7, Robertson 0-1 0-0 0. Totals 30-60 20-25 87. IUPUI (6-24) Gibbs 4-5 3-6 12, Patton 12-16 0-2 24, Rice 5-13 0-2 10, Esposito 5-13 0-0 12, Hubert 1-3 1-1 3, Gaines 1-3 0-0 3, Shanklin 2-7 0-0 5, Kilcoff 0-0 0-0 0, Rose 0-2 0-0 0. Totals 30-62 4-11 69.

Halftime—S. Dakota 47-38. 3-Point Goals—S. Dakota 7-23 (Boots 3-8, Myles 2-6, Kasperbauer 2-8, Robertson 0-1), IUPUI 5-15 (Esposito 2-5, Gibbs 1-1, Gaines 1-2, Shanklin 1-2), Hubert 0-2, Rice 0-3). Fouled Out—Gaines, Rebounds—S. Dakota 36 (Myles 7), IUPUI 32 (Rice 7). Assists—S. Dakota 18 (Gruis, Myles 5), IUPUI 16 (Esposito 7). Total Fouls—S. Dakota 10, IUPUI 21. 21—A—639. SOUTH DAKOTA STATE 100, OMAHA 82: OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Chad White scored 23 points, including a career-high six 3-pointers, and South Dakota State clinched a share of the Summit League title with a 100-82 victory over Nebraska-Omaha Thursday night. All five Jackrabbits starters scored in double figures as did reserve Marcus Heemstra. Nate Wolters had 18 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists while Jordan Dykstra scored 14 points and grabbed a career-high 17 rebounds. The Jackrabbits (22-9, 13-3) will be the No. 1 seed in the Summit tournament and will play IUPUI in the first

round on March 9. Tony Fiegen scored 14 points, Brayden Carlson 13 and Heemstra scored 10 for SDSU, which shot 58 percent. Justin Simmons led Omaha with 29 points and Alex Welhouse scored 16. The Mavericks (11-19, 6-9) had won three in a row. They aren’t eligible for the Summit tournament because they are new members of the league. S. DAKOTA ST. 100, NEBRASKA-OMAHA 82 S. DAKOTA ST. (22-9) Fiegen 7-8 0-1 14, Dykstra 4-13 5-5 14, Wolters 7-17 3-7 18, Carlson 4-7 4-4 13, White 8-11 1-2 23, Prince 3-3 2-2 8, Jacobsen 0-0 0-0 0, Horstman 0-0 0-0 0, Heemstra 4-5 2-3 10. Totals 37-84 17-24 100. NEBRASKA-OMAHA (11-19) Welhouse 5-8 2-4 16, Karhoff 3-11 0-1 6, Phillips 1-6 2-2 4, Carter 1-0 2-2 5, Simmons 12-23 4-5 29, Coleman 0-1 0-0 0,

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West Central Edges Parkston For Region 5A Girls’ Title

BY JILANNE DOOM
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WAGNER — In the final seconds, it appeared the Region 5A girls’ basketball title game would have a similar outcome as last season. Parkston, the 2012 Class A runner-up, had the lead, the momentum, and the ball. But an untimely turnover and a foul with less than a minute to play sent West Central junior Madison Kuehl to the line where she would sink a pair of pressure free throws. Those crucial points not only gave West Central the one point lead, but eventually the win 44-43 Thursday night in Wagner. “We practice free throws everyday in practice,” Kuehl said. “It was critical and I just took my time and went up there and told myself I was going to make them.” But the 31 minutes of basketball before those shots looked like anybody’s game. Parkston grabbed the opening tip but quickly turned the ball over as both teams struggled to find a rhythm. After a couple trips to the line for Parkston, West Central grabbed a pair of steals and jumped out to a 11-5 lead - their biggest of the night. Parkston senior Erica Herrold gave her team a boost in the second, making cuts and finishing post moves to close the scoring gap. Both teams found themselves in early foul trouble though, and Parkston took advantage of the one-and-

one opportunities behind the line. With shots not falling from the outside for either squad, scoring relied on short jumpers and free throws for much of the night. West Central’s Afton Johnson finished a tough drive to the basket giving her team a 21-19 advantage going into the half. The third quarter remained evenly matched but the speed increased considerably as elimination-game pressure heightened. Herrold dominated the paint, scoring a quick six points under the basket as Parkston took the lead heading into the final quarter 31-29. Despite a strong layup by Kuehl to open the quarter, the momentum began to head in a definite direction. Parkston senior Mackenzie Weidenbach took a charge and senior Logan Wagner followed it up with a crucial three-pointer from the corner, causing a West Central timeout. Three West Central starters had racked up four fouls apiece and Parkston couldn’t miss from the free throw line. “We’ve had a lot of come-from-behind wins actually this year,” West Central head coach Joe Cafrey said regarding his team’s final-seconds turnaround. “We were really able to stay focused and dig in when we need to.” And dig in they did as Weidenbach’s pair of free throws with under two minutes to play would be Parkston’s last points on the board. REGION 5A | PAGE 9A

Parker Edges Centerville For Region 4B Title



EMILY NIEBRUGGE/P&D
The Parker Pheasants celebrate after winning the Region 4B girls’ basketball Championship with a 55-53 victory over Centerville on Thursday in Harrisburg.

BY EMILY NIEBRUGGE
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HARRISBURG — The determination of the Parker Pheasants paid off in a big way Thursday night as they claimed the Region 4B girls’ basketball Championship. The Pheasants faced the Centerville Tornadoes in Harrisburg, claiming a 55-53 victory to earn them the title. “The one thing these girls don’t know is the word ‘quit,’” Parker head coach Tami Jurgens said. “They are hard-nosed, hard-playing kids. They are very determined, very stubborn girls, and it works for them.” The Pheasants put themselves ahead early in the game, leading Centerville 17-6 with 1:50 left in the first period. After ending the first period ahead 19-10, Parker was able to widen the gap and end the

first half, leading Centerville with a score of 31-16. “We knew it would be hard to keep up that level of intensity in order to finish a game like this,” Jurgens said. “We knew Kieran O’Malley wasn’t going to stay quiet all night — she’s a talented player and you do what you can against her.” The Tornadoes did come within 10 points of the Pheasants with a three pointer from Tessa Weeldreyer with 2:49 left in the third period. Parker still leading 39-29. The Pheasants ended the third period with a 43-36 lead. But Centerville came out strong in the fourth period and took the lead for the first time in the game with a shot by Sara Northdurt, the Tornadoes now leading Parker 44-43 with 4:48 left in the game.

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