

Poppe Navigates 'Uncharted Waters' Of Coaching Double Duty



P&D FILE PHOTO

Avon girls' basketball assistant coach Amy Yost and head coach Brad Poppe stand as the Lady Pirates huddle prior to their District 11B matchup with Scotland on Feb. 19 at the Corn Palace in Mitchell. The seasons for both the Avon boys and girls, both coached by Poppe, ended on the Corn Palace floor. Poppe and others associated with the Avon basketball programs looked back on the season in the final part of our series following Poppe during the 2012-13 season.

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK
james.cimburek@yankton.net

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the final part of a continuing series following Avon basketball coach Brad Poppe during the 2012-13 season.

AVON — When the basketball season ended — for the girls on Feb. 19 and for the boys on Feb. 26 — Shelly Poppe was sad, even though it meant she'd see more of her husband.

"Looking back on it, as hectic as it was, I was very sad when the seasons ended," said Shelly Poppe, the wife of Avon basketball coach Brad Poppe. "He had so much fun with all of it, it was sad when it stopped."

Coaching for Brad Poppe didn't stop for long. He has already begun work as the boys' track and field coach in Avon, with the first competition coming April 2.

"I took a couple of weeks off and enjoyed watching the two state tournaments," he said. "We started track this week, and the kids are excited about that."

'Uncharted Waters'

With young but athletic squads for both the boys and girls, Coach Poppe knew there would be plenty of work to do going in to the season. He also did not know what to expect with the rigors of coaching both teams concurrently.

"This was uncharted waters. We went in not knowing what to expect," he said. "But I felt overall that things went pretty well. I was surprised at how smoothly things went."

Others were also surprised with the way things went.

"I think things went very well. They went better than all of us expected them to," said Avon junior Chesney Nagel, an all-conference performer for the girls' team this season. "At the beginning, we expected things to be chaotic, but they were all very organized."

Avon junior Brandon Kocmich, an all-conference performer for the boys' team this past season, was not surprised, since Poppe had coached the boys in recent years before taking both programs this year.

"It was exactly how I expected it to be," he said. "I knew he would

come to practice ready for us, then would go to their practice (girls) ready for them."

While Avon Athletic Director Tom Culver expected the on-the-court aspects to go well, his pre-season concerns were about Poppe's personal well-being.

"I knew Brad would give it his all and do a good job," he said. "I was worried that he would become overwhelmed or frazzled. I was worried about him getting worn down. But at the end, he was still as upbeat and positive as he was at the beginning."

"I'm happy for him that this was the case."

Poppe is quick to praise all involved with making things work.

"A lot of that credit goes not only to the kids, but the two assistant coaches, as well as the parents, for making things flexible," he said.

One of the main challenges that Coach Poppe and his staff — girls' assistant Amy Yost and boys' assistant Paul Thury — faced was dealing with practices, especially on

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CSU Rams Make Pitino's 'Dangerous' List

LEXINGTON, Ky. (AP) — Before the NCAA tournament begins, Rick Pitino likes to scan the list of teams, looking for a few sleepers he considers "dangerous."

"It's based on how many upperclassmen do they have that have stayed together and how much talent do they have," the Louisville coach said Friday. "You have a lot of upperclassmen, but they may not be that good."

Saint Louis made his cut. So did Oregon, which promptly reinforced Pitino's genius by knocking off fifth-seeded Oklahoma State. He was right on with LaSalle, which took down Kansas State. Davidson didn't win, but Pitino could have told Buzz Williams days ago that the Wildcats were going to give his Marquette team fits.

Another team that would have been in his bracket is Colorado State, the overall No. 1 seed's opponent Saturday.

"Five seniors, No. 1 rebounding margin team in the country, I know Larry is a terrific coach," Pitino said, ticking off the qualities that make the Rams so fearsome. "They have all the ingredients to be a great basketball team, and they are."

"I always look at talent and experience coming together," Pitino added, "and Colorado State has both."

The Cardinals' dismantling of North Carolina A&T on Thursday night was so thorough, so ferocious it's hard to imagine anyone interrupting their march to Atlanta. Louisville set an NCAA tournament record with 20 steals — Pitino couldn't wait to share that tidbit with Florida coach Billy Donovan, whose '87 Providence Friars were one of three teams to hold the previous mark — and Russ Smith tied the individual mark with eight grabs.

The Cardinals forced a season-high 27 turnovers, and had 67 deflections.

But, no offense to A&T, the Aggies were a dream matchup. They play a similar, running, trapping

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PRE-GAME WARMUP



JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

A youngster gets some shooting in during a time-out in the sixth grade girls' white division game between McCook Lacey's and the Avon Pirates on Friday at Yankton Middle School. A total of 85 teams from four states are participating in this year's event, which concludes today (Saturday). Scores from opening round games are in today's Scoreboard, Page 11. Photos from the event are featured on Pages 8-9, as well as online at spotted.yankton.net

NASCAR: Denny Hamlin-Joey Logano Feud Still Isn't Finished

FONTANA, Calif. (AP) — Denny Hamlin is ready for his feud with Joey Logano to be finished after the NASCAR drivers nearly came to blows last week at Bristol.

Logano isn't quite so sure it's over, because he's still waiting for an apology.

The former teammates haven't spoken since their collision on the track carried into a post-race confrontation in Tennessee. Hamlin won the pole and Logano finished sixth in qualifying at Fontana on Friday, suggesting they could be close to each other again this weekend.

"As far as I'm concerned, there's nothing to it from here on out," Hamlin said.

But even Hamlin knows it isn't that simple.

When asked if he considered the feud finished, Logano replied: "Not until anyone says anything to me personally, no."

While Kasey Kahne won the race, Logano and Hamlin captured much of the attention at the Bristol bulling. After Hamlin spun Logano while Logano raced Jeff Gordon for a late lead, Logano ran over to Hamlin's car and leaned in the window for a few words after the race, sparking a brief confrontation between their teams.

Hamlin said he was just responding to Logano's dangerous driving by making contact that spun him, claiming Logano had cut him off three times earlier. Hamlin then ripped Logano's driving abilities, making remarks Hamlin now regrets.

"I probably shouldn't have gave that last little jab at the end," Hamlin said. "I probably should have just left it alone. ... As a driver, it's not up to me to determine where he stands amongst the elite of NASCAR. I think the fans and the teams decide that. I didn't need to give my opinion on that. I think that was kind of a low blow."

The drivers are embroiled in a classic Bristol feud, with hot tempers frequently flaring in the track's cramped conditions. Emotions might cool down with the longer track and cooler heads in California, but they're not there yet.

Although he regrets costing Logano his chance to win, Hamlin said he's not the villain.

"I didn't see it as a huge deal," Hamlin said. "People at Bristol make contact. Where my frustration level was, people didn't see the three times I got cut off before you saw it on TV, one time giving us left front damage. So that ticked me off, and obviously my way of retaliating was to nudge him. Well, I shouldn't have nudged him in the spot where I did, and he spun out."

Logano was more circumspect about the incident, first expressing disbelief when told Hamlin was sorry — and then laughing when he heard Hamlin is only sorry for ripping him, not for wrecking him.

"So then he's not sorry. OK, all right. OK. OK, whatever," Logano said with another laugh.

Florida Gulf Coast Takes Down Georgetown 78-68

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Sherwood Brown scored 24 points and Bernard Thompson had 23 to lead Florida Gulf Coast to an incredible NCAA tournament debut, a 78-68 win over second-seeded Georgetown.

The Eagles, in their second season of being eligible for Division I postseason, became just the seventh No. 15 seed to beat a No. 2.

FGCU (25-10) will play the winner of the game between seventh-seeded San Diego State and No. 10 Oklahoma in the third round on Sunday.

A night after America's oldest university, Harvard, pulled off a major upset over fourth-seeded New Mexico, one of its youngest — FGCU's first student was admitted in 1997 — got one that was even bigger.

The Eagles took control with a 21-2 run that gave them a 52-33 lead with 12:28 to play, though the Hoyas used a furious rally to get within 72-68 with 52 seconds left.

It was another disappointing NCAA exit for the Hoyas (25-7), who have lost to a double-digit seed in their last four appearances.

Markel Starks had 23 points for the Hoyas.

NORTH CAROLINA 78, VILLANOVA 71: KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — P.J. Hairston scored 23 points, James Michael McAdoo added 17 and North Carolina unleashed a flurry of 3-pointers to subdue gritty Villanova.

The never-say-die Wildcats (20-14) erased

a 20-point deficit that North Carolina built in the first half and then nearly climbed out of a nine-point hole in the final minutes after the Tar Heels hit three consecutive 3s and once again appeared to take control.

The victory set up a possible dream matchup in the third round for Kansas fans, who have been jamming the Sprint Center in downtown Kansas City, about 30 minutes from the Jayhawks' campus. The eighth-seeded Tar Heels (25-10) take on the winner between Western Kentucky and No. 1 seed Kansas, where Williams coached for 15 years and rang up more than 400 wins.

JayVaughn Pinkston had 20 points and Darrin Hilliard scored 18 for Villanova.

FLORIDA 79, NORTHWESTERN STATE 47: AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Erik Murphy had 18 points to lead four Florida players in double figures and the Gators shut down the NCAA's highest-scoring team.

No. 3 seed Florida turned this one into a rout with a 19-1 run in the second half and held the 14th-seeded Demons (23-9) to their fewest points this season — 34 below their average.

Patric Young had 16 points and nine rebounds for Florida (27-7). Kenny Boynton and Scottie Wilbekin both scored 11.

DeQuan Hicks had 12 points for the Demons, who upset Iowa as the No. 14 seed in their last NCAA tournament seven years ago. They couldn't repeat that feat against the Gators, who lost in the regional finals each of the past two seasons.

Florida plays Minnesota or UCLA on Sunday.

EAST

INDIANA 83, JAMES MADISON 62: DAYTON, Ohio (AP) — Freshman Yogi Ferrell scored 14 points in the first six minutes as top-seeded Indiana slam dunked its way past James Madison.

Not taking any chances with a No. 16 seed,

the Hoosiers (28-6) started fast and built a 33-point lead in the second half over the Dukes (21-15) and opened the tourney with a statement they intend to be around for a while.

Looking every bit like a team capable of cutting down the nets in Atlanta next month, Indiana will play Temple in the second round on Sunday.

Ferrell finished with 16 points, eight rebounds and six assists, and Cody Zeller had four dunks for Indiana.

Freshman Andre Nation led James Madison with 24 points.

TEMPLE 76, NORTH CAROLINA STATE 72: DAYTON, Ohio (AP) — Khalif Wyatt scored 31 points, finishing the game with an injured left thumb that had him grimacing before his clinching free throws, and Temple broke with its one-and-done NCAA tournament trend.

The ninth-seeded Owls (24-9) opened a 17-point lead before Wyatt — the Atlantic 10's player of the year and top scorer — hurt his left thumb and left the game briefly, returning with black tape on the non-shooting hand.

Every shot was an adventure, but he made enough — including six painful but perfect free throws in the final 32 seconds — to keep Temple around for more than one game. The Owls had lost their opener in four of their last five NCAA trips.

No. 8 NC State (24-11) trailed most of the game and came up short of a deep tournament run on the 30th anniversary of its national title.

Richard Howell had 14 points and 15 rebounds for NC State.

MIAMI 78, PACIFIC 49: AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Durand Scott had 21 points and Miami had a triumphant return to the NCAA tournament.

The Hurricanes (28-6), who may be even better than their No. 2 seed in the East Regional

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STEVEN M. FALK/PHILADELPHIA DAILY NEWS/MCT

The Georgetown bench watches as they fall to Florida Gulf Coast in the second round of the NCAA Men's Apogee Basketball Tournament at the Wells Fargo Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Friday. FGCU upset Georgetown, 78-68.