

Lancers, Raiders Split In GPAC Opener

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK
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The Great Plains Athletic Conference baseball opener between Mount Marty and Northwestern had all the feel of the teams' matchups in the GPAC Tourney a year ago.

Except this time, it was Northwestern that was rallying late.

Northwestern scored four runs in the seventh to force extra innings before falling 6-4 in the opener, then scored in the seventh and eighth to win the nightcap 3-2 in the nightcap of their GPAC doubleheader on Thursday at Riverside Field.

The games were played at Yankton's Riverside Field, but Northwestern served as the home team for both contests. The twinbill had been scheduled to be played in Orange City, Iowa, but Northwestern's field was not playable.

MMC moved to 7-13, 1-1 in the GPAC. Northwestern, picked third in the preseason GPAC poll, moved to 10-12, 1-1 in league play.

"We played some good games today," said MMC head coach Andy Bernatow. "We saw a lot of positives, but there's still room for improvement."

The doubleheader brought

back memories of the 2012 GPAC Tournament, when MMC scored all 13 of its runs with two outs in innings of a 13-4 victory, then blanked the Raiders 1-0 in the championship. This time, though, Northwestern was getting many of the key hits.

"We have to get better at closing out games," Bernatow said. "We felt that after the fifth inning of the second game, we fell flat. It's not being greedy, it's about becoming a winning ball club."

In the opener, MMC scored four runs in the third, thanks to five hits and two Northwestern errors. A Tyler Edler RBI single and a Jared Miller run-scoring double were the key blows.

"We're lucky we had that big inning early," Bernatow said. "(Northwestern starting pitcher Ryan) Brassier started turning it on."

MMC starting pitcher Dominic Wieseler kept the Raiders at bay until the seventh inning, when a one-out error was followed by four more Northwestern batters reaching. Davis Bloemendaal's two-run double sending MMC to the bullpen for Josh Cleveland, who gave up a sacrifice fly to Cody Groskreutz to tie the game.

In the eighth, Miller's one-out single sent the Raiders to the

bullpen for Josh Turner. But Turner's wildness allowed pinch-runner Dillon Schenkel to score on a wild pitch and put three straight batters on with a walk. Chase Rozeboom came on for Northwestern, but his first pitch flew behind pinch-hitter Bryton Carlson's back, allowing a second MMC run to score.

Cleveland got out of the eighth with one hit, earning the victory.

Miller had three of Mount Marty's eight hits, with Edler recording two hits. Corey Van Gorp and Mitch Peschon each had two hits for Northwestern.

Cleveland (1-2) got the final five outs to pick up his first win of the season. Wieseler took a shutout into the seventh, striking out three in 6 1/3 innings of work.

Turner's wildness made a tough-luck loser out of Brassier (3-2), who struck out five in 7 1/3 innings of work.

MMC took a 2-0 lead in the third on a Miller run-scoring single and a Mike O'Connell sacrifice fly, but the Lancers left the bases loaded.

"(Northwestern starter Taylor) Morris is a guy that's sporadic but effective," Bernatow said. "We have to do a better job of hopping on those type of guys

when they're down in the count."

MMC starter A.J. Griffith allowed four hits through the first six innings, but singles by Morris and Micah Linn put Northwestern on the board. The Lancers called on Cleveland again, but Erik Widener's RBI single tied the game at two.

Northwestern won the game in the eighth on Peschon's two-out single.

Van Gorp and Morris had two hits each for Northwestern. MMC was held to three hits in the eight-inning contest.

Matt Pioscos (1-2) picked up his first win of the season, allowing one hit over the final three innings. Cleveland (1-3) took the loss.

The Lancers host Dordt on Saturday in GPAC action, a 1 p.m. doubleheader at Riverside Field.

"We're going to get Dordt's best," Bernatow said. "They were not able to play (Thursday), so we're going to see their top pitchers."

"But if we want to get to where we need to be, we have to beat the top guys."

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JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

Mount Marty pitcher Dominic Wieseler sends the ball home during the first inning of the Lancers' opener with Northwestern on Thursday at Riverside Field. Wieseler pitched a shutout into the seventh inning, but took a no-decision in the Lancers' 6-4, eight-inning victory. Northwestern took the nightcap 3-2, also in eight innings.

McNeese State Ends USD's Run

BY CHRIS RILEY
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VERMILLION — After completing a number of second-half comebacks throughout their season, USD struggled down the stretch in Thursday night's game at the DakotaDome as the Coyotes squandered an excellent first-half effort against McNeese State. The Cowgirls used a 27-5 run midway through the final period to take the 71-63 victory and secure a berth in the Women's Basketball Invitational (WBI) title game.

McNeese State senior twins Ashlyn (26 points) and Caitlyn (19 points) Baggett combined for 45 points and 13 rebounds while younger sister Allison, a freshman, added eight points off the bench for the Baggetts to account for 75 percent of the Cowgirls' offense.

"They (the Baggett twins) are very quick," Coyotes' senior Tempestt Wilson said. "They can shoot the ball really well and get into the lane and have a consistency in their float game that's hard to stop."

The contest started as well as possible for Coyotes, as USD controlled the pace throughout the first 20 minutes and held an eight-point halftime lead on the strength of a 50 percent shooting effort from the field.

Signs of second-half struggles for the Coyotes were on the horizon however, as USD hit three of four three-point attempts in the first six minutes of action, but missed their final four long-range jumpers of the half. USD then went 1-for-10 from deep in the second half, and saw their shooting percentage from the field drop to 21 percent.

"I think we ran out of a gas a little bit down the stretch," Coyotes' coach Amy Williams said.

We had some opportunities, we just didn't hit the shots in the second half."

While the Coyotes were cooling off, McNeese State turned their offense around as the Cowgirls went from shooting 30 percent in the first half to 56 percent in the second.

"They are an explosive team — those girls can step back and shoot the three or get in the lane," USD senior point guard Alexis Yackley said. "They spread

you out and it's hard to guard one on one. We just kind of broke down defensively and they hit their shots."

The Coyotes also lost their rebounding edge in the second half, getting beat on the boards by a 21-15 margin after out-rebounding McNeese State 36-28 in the first half.

Despite their season ending just one game short of a tournament championship, Williams put her inaugural year at the helm of the Coyotes in perspective after the game.

"I'm disappointed that our season is ending, mostly because I'm going to miss coaching this team," Williams added. "But I could not be more proud of this group and the run that we made."

USD ends their season 19-16, tying Williams with former coaches Chad Lavin and Gary Larson for the most wins as a first-year Coyotes coach.

USD sophomore Nicole Seekamp led the Coyotes with 20 points. The Australian native, who became just the eighth player to school history to score 500 points in a season last week's victory over Lamar, also added five rebounds and four assists.

Wilson added 15 points in her final game as a Coyote, her 23rd double-digit scoring performance in the past 25 games. Junior Polly Harrington scored 10 points while sophomore Lisa Loeffler added six points and a game-high 11 rebounds.

Wilson, Yackley, Sam Mehr and Pam January wrapped up their Coyote with the final home game.

McNeese State, 21-14, will play Detroit in the WBI Championship game at Calihan Hall in Detroit on Saturday afternoon.

You can follow Chris Riley on Twitter at twitter.com/ChrisRiley

MCNEESE STATE (21-14)
Cecilia Okoye 6-16 2-2 14, Arianna James 0-2 0-0 0, Ashlyn Baggett 7-19 9-13 26, Caitlyn Baggett 7-13 3-4 19, Alaina Verdin 0-2 0-0 0, Allison Baggett 4-6 0-0 8, Jaylin Johnson 0-2 0-0 0, Liz Kingham 0-0 0-0 0, NeTanya Jones 2-3 0-0 4. Totals 26-63 14-19 71.

SOUTH DAKOTA (19-16)
Nicole Seekamp 5-16 9-10 20, Lisa Loeffler 3-7 0-0 6, Polly Harrington 2-6 6-7 10, Tempestt Wilson 5-17 4-6 15, Alexis Yackley 1-2 0-0 3, Tia Hemmiller 0-0 0-0 0, Sam Mehr 1-4 0-0 3, Pam January 0-0 0-0 0, Margaret McCloud 3-4 0-0 6, Heidi Hoff 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 20-66 19-23 63.

Halftime — USD 36, MS 28. Three-Point Field Goals — MS 5-15 (Ashlyn Baggett 3-8, Caitlyn Baggett 2-4), USD 4-18 (Yackley 1-2, Mehr 1-4, Seekamp 1-5, Wilson 1-6). Total Rebounds — USD 41 (Loeffler 11), MS 35 (Ashlyn Baggett 9). Personal Fouls — USD 18, MS 14. Assists — USD 12 (Seekamp 4), MS 9 (Caitlyn Baggett 6). Turnovers — USD 14, MS 9. Blocked Shots — MS 5 (Okoye 4), USD 4 (Loeffler 2). Steals — MS 7 (Okoye 4), USD 1 (Harrington). Fouled Out — Mehr. Attendance 1,153.



JILANNE DOOM/P&D

South Dakota's Tempestt Wilson, left, goes to the basket against McNeese State's Ashlyn Baggett during their semifinal game in the Women's Basketball Invitational on Thursday at the DakotaDome in Vermillion. McNeese used a strong second half to win 71-63. USD finished with a 19-16 record.

Twin Terrors Spell End To Coyotes' Season

BY JEREMY HOECK
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VERMILLION — A pair of twin sisters single-handedly, or together, to be accurate, ended what could have been a truly special season for the University of South Dakota women's basketball team.

Fifty-five points.

Billed as a road-tested, veteran team that relied on guards Caitlyn and Ashlyn Baggett, the McNeese State Cowgirls were as good as advertised Thursday night in the Women's Basketball Invitational (WBI) semifinals in Vermillion.

Held in check over the first half, to the tune of 18 combined points, the seniors combined for 37 points after halftime and continually sliced through the Coyote defense — which had played a prominent role in USD's run through the 16-team tournament.

"You may not think this, but I thought we did a decent job defending them," said Coyote head coach Amy Williams, who pointed to Caitlyn's shooting percentage of 7-for-13 and Ashlyn's 7-for-19 effort as proof that maybe the sisters didn't completely explode on USD.

Aside from the 55 points between the Baggett sisters, the loss for the Coyotes (19-16) was almost based on what the home team didn't do in the 71-63 defeat.

After hitting 50 percent of their shots in the first half, the Coyotes looked tired in the second half — which played a key role in their 21-percent effort. It was much the same story as the Summit League championship loss to South Dakota State.

Those scoring lulls, which earlier in the season were an issue, suddenly propped up again.

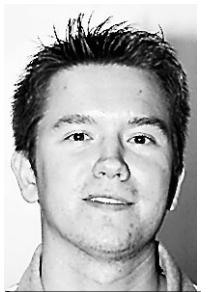
"When you're getting open looks or the same looks that we normally get, and they're rimming out, sometimes you just don't have your legs or you're just running a little bit out of gas," said Williams, whose first season ends one win shy of a title game.

Of course, Caitlyn Baggett had something to do with that.

The 5-foot-6 speedster from Iota, Louisiana — deep in the heart of cajun country — hit 3-of-4 three-pointers and added six assists.

"She has that look in her eye right now, defensively and offensively," said McNeese State coach Brooks Donald-Williams. "She's not going to let us lose one."

Consecutive threes by the Baggett sisters pushed McNeese State's lead to 60-50 with 5:08 remaining, marking the end of a 27-5 run for the visitors to take control.



Jeremy HOECK

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Class AA Girls' All-State Squad Has 'Dream Team' Feel

BY LUKE HAGEN
Mitchell Daily Republic

MITCHELL — Mitchell girls' basketball coach Wes Morgan was ready to form a college basketball team.

After being read the six players who earned 2013 Class AA all-state girls' basketball honors, Morgan started explaining who would play each position and how dominant the squad could be.

Mitchell's Macy Miller and Kerri Young, Sioux Falls Washington's Emma Hanson, Sioux Falls Lincoln's Cera Ledbetter, Sioux Falls Roosevelt's Tagyn Larson and Aberdeen Central's Sami Knecht comprise this year's Class AA all-state team, which has been announced today by the South Dakota Basketball Coaches Association and state sportswriters association.

"That's a pretty solid team," said Morgan, whose Kernels squad was represented by Miller and Young on the first team for the second consecutive year. "They'd give a lot of college teams good

competition right now. There's a lot of talent there."

Both South Dakota State University recruits, Miller and Young led Mitchell High School to its second consecutive state championship game this season and a 22-4 record.

Miller, a 6-foot junior point guard, led Mitchell in scoring at 19 points per game and set the school's single-season scoring record with 493 points. She also averaged 5.8 rebounds and 2.3 assists in her fourth year on varsity.

Young, a senior guard/forward, averaged 16.6 points, 6.1 rebounds and 2.6 assists per game. She was named the state's Gatorade player of the year earlier this month and wrapped up her high school career as Mitchell's career all-time leading scorer with 1,760 points, which even tops Mike Miller, who now plays for the NBA's Miami Heat.

"I think they complement each other in the fact that people can't key on one or the other," Morgan said. "Kerri and Macy

are both scorers and their defense created a lot of offense for us this season."

Denying Miller and Young a second consecutive Class AA state championship this year was Sioux Falls Lincoln.

Patriots' Cera Ledbetter, a 6-foot senior center, helped her team slow down Miller and Young in the championship game, holding the Kernels to a season-low 36 points.

Ledbetter, who's looking to play junior college basketball, averaged 15.1 points and 6.4 rebounds per game en route to the title and helping her team to a 17-8 record. Last year, she was a second-team all-state selection.

"When athletic ability combines with physical strength that Cera is blessed with, you have a player that other teams have an extremely difficult time dealing with," Lincoln coach Lyle Pearson said. "Cera was clearly the object of other teams' game planning and was the core of our state championship team."

Knecht, another senior, averaged 15

points, 10 rebounds, 3 blocks and 2 steals this year, helping the Golden Eagles to a fourth-place finish at state. Knecht led Aberdeen to a 21-3 record and shared the Eastern South Dakota Conference championship with Mitchell.

The 6-foot-2 center is headed to the University of Sioux Falls this fall to continue her basketball career. She was a second-team all-state selection as a junior.

"Sami is a great competitor with an outstanding attitude," Aberdeen Central coach Dawn Seiler said. "Her work ethic has allowed her to improve on a daily basis."

Hanson, a senior, and Larson, a sophomore, each earned their first all-state basketball honors.

Hanson helped the Warriors to a 22-3 record and third-place state tournament finish, averaging 10 points and 6 rebounds per game. Despite having a strong season on the basketball court, Hanson has chosen to play volleyball at the University of Kansas.

"Emma's skills, athleticism and leadership were a big asset to the Washington Warriors," Washington coach Nate Malchow said. "She's a threat to score on the inside and perimeter, a very good rebounder and defender and she has a great basketball IQ."

Larson is the youngest member of this year's all-state team. The 6-foot-3 sophomore guard averaged 11.9 points, 8 rebounds and 3.9 blocks per game, helping Roosevelt to a 17-8 record and a sixth-place spot at state.

"She is an amazing defender and adds more and more offense to her game all the time," Roosevelt coach Chris Clark said. "When you get to know her, you can't help but to root for her."

The Class AA all-state second team includes three seniors, a junior and a pair of sophomores. Lincoln's Darby Huginin, Aberdeen's Brynn Flakus, Washington's Ellie Benson, Brandon Valley's Allison Koehn, O'Gorman's Jessica Mieras and Pierre's Sydney Palmer round out the second team.