

# Dancing!



JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

University of South Dakota women's basketball coach Amy Williams, left, shows her excitement as she joins her team on the stand to accept their Summit League post-season tournament trophy. USD beat Denver 82-71 to claim the program's first Division I conference title. The Coyotes will advance to the NCAA Tournament. Pairings will be announced on Monday, March 17.

## Coyotes Beat Denver 82-71 For Summit League Women's Title



JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

South Dakota starting point guard Tia Hemiller cuts down the net after the Coyotes won the Summit League women's basketball tournament on Tuesday in Sioux Falls.

BY JEREMY HOECK  
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SIOUX FALLS — South Dakota will have a different entrant into the 'Big Dance.' Here come the Coyotes to the NCAA Tournament.

A year after coming up just short in the conference title game, the University of South Dakota women reached — quite literally — the top of the Summit.

"When we were battling, it was just like, 'I don't want this feeling again,'" said senior Polly Harrington, named the Summit League tournament MVP. "We're going to push until we can't push anymore, until we see the results we want."

Mission accomplished. Capping off a strong weekend, the Coyote women — the fourth seed in the 7-team field — surged past Denver 82-71 in Tuesday's Summit League championship game.

After rallying from a 17-point deficit to beat Western Illinois in the first round, USD turned around and rolled past five-time league champion South Dakota State in the semifinals. And so, Tuesday's final against No. 6 Den-

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**NICOLE SEEKAMP, USD JUNIOR**

ver could have been a coronation for a new champion. Like it has been all season, though, it wasn't easy for the Coyotes (19-13).

"We stuck together. We knew we weren't finished fighting," junior Nicole Seekamp said. "Our team's great, and I love playing with them."

A team that started the conference season 0-4. A team that lost a starter (Heidi Hoff) to a season-ending injury.

A team that, at times, really struggled on the defensive end.

Yes, that team is going dancing. "When I took this job, we wanted to raise the bar," second-year head coach Amy Williams said. "I was fortunate enough to walk into a very good situation."

What Williams did,

though, was vault a program that had found Division I transition success in various other post-season tournaments into one that has competed for an NCAA Tournament bid.

South Dakota State had been the cream of the crop in the Summit League until this year, when a new team hoisted the championship trophy.

"It's not surprising at all to me for them to be in the championship game," Denver coach Kerry Cremeans said. "They've been a force late in the conference season."

The Coyotes were especially strong down the stretch of a tight affair.

After having led by just one point at halftime, USD took the lead back for good on a three-pointer by Raeshel Contreras with 8:49 to play.

Within five minutes, the

Coyote lead was in double figures, and from there they were able to start the celebration in front of 4,125 fans.

As has been the norm with USD this season, it was particularly balanced in the title game. Six players reached double figures, with Contreras (13), Margaret McCloud (10), Bridget Arens (10) and Tia Hemiller (10) having big games.

It wasn't long after the final that the questions of where USD could find itself in the NCAA Tournament started propping up.

"It's definitely exciting. Once we find out who we play, we can refocus," Seekamp said. "We're going to cherish this moment for a few days, and get back on the road and hopefully get a few more wins."

And yes, USD plans to savor the moment. Williams joked that the program "will not hide" the success from recruits.

Though on a whole different stage, the Coyotes were perhaps prepared for what the NCAA Tournament pres-

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## Bucks Beat Arrows For State Tourney Trip

BY JEREMY HOECK  
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After waiting six years to cut down nets and celebrate, the Yankton Bucks weren't about to miss a chance to enjoy it.

Handshakes, hugs, photos, interviews.

They weren't ready to rush off to the locker room after beating Watertown 55-51 in Tuesday night's Region 1AA final at the Summit Center.

"It's huge for Yankton, as a community," senior guard Ryan Olson said. "I've never seen a gym like this packed for a high school game, except for a state tournament. This is unbelievable. I think Yankton has the best fans in the state."

As he looked around the crowd of parents and supporters gathered on the court, Olson took it beyond basketball.

"I'm really proud to be from Yankton and get this done for this town," he said.

The victory sends the Bucks (14-9) to the South Dakota State Class AA Tournament — March 20-22 in Rapid City — for the first time since 2008.

So there was reason to be

### State Tourney Tickets Available

Season tickets for the South Dakota State Class AA Boys' Basketball Tournament, March 20-22 at the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, will be available for advanced purchase beginning today (Wednesday) at 8 a.m. at the Yankton School District Administration Office, 2410 West City Limits Road in Yankton.

Tickets will be on sale from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. each day, today through Friday, March 14. Only season tickets will be available for advance sales. Sections will be as-

signed to the eight qualifying schools based on seeding. Adults wishing to have their young children sit with them in a reserved seat at the state tournament must purchase a reserved seat ticket.

Orders must be made in person, and payment is due at the time the order is placed. Both adult reserved tickets and student season general admission tickets will be available.

For questions regarding seating, contact the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center Box Office at 605-394-4111.

especially excited, said second-year head coach Chris Haynes.

"I'm just so happy for our seniors," said Haynes, whose team lost in the regions last year.

"When we lost this game in Brookings last year, they made a true commitment right there. We wanted to get back to this game. I'm just so proud of them."

Despite having a double-

digit lead late in the fourth quarter, Yankton had to make critical plays at critical times.

With the home team up 11 points with 1:32 to play, Watertown's Nate Davis hit consecutive threes and Alex Gauer put back a missed shot, pulling the Arrows within 52-49 with 40 seconds left. Junior Brady Hale made a pair of foul shots with 27 seconds left, and Olson



JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

Yankton Bucks players celebrate after beating Watertown to advance on Tuesday at the Summit Center, clinching a berth in the S.D. State Class AA Boys' Basketball Tournament. It is Yankton's first state tournament appearance in six years.

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