

USD To Begin Search For Next Men's Basketball Coach; James Apparently Out

BY JEREMY HOECK
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The University of South Dakota has apparently parted ways with interim men's basketball coach Joey James.

After guiding the Coyotes to a 12-18 record this season, James will not be retained on a permanent basis following his only season leading the program. He took over for long-time head coach Dave Boots, who abruptly resigned last September.

According to senior Trevor Gruis, the team was told of the news late Monday night. And by Tuesday at noon, USD announced only that it will conduct a national search.

"I was surprised it happened that quick," Gruis said during halftime of the Summit League women's champi-

onship game in Sioux Falls. "I felt bad for the women's team, that it took away from them a little bit.

"Now that I'm not playing anymore, I can see both sides of it," he added. "I'd like to see him get another chance, but I guess that's the bad side of sports."

USD's press release announced that the university has contracted with Fogler Consulting to assist in the search.

Noticeably missing from the release was a mention of James or his status.

"As we stated in October, the men's basketball coaching position at the University of South Dakota is one that merits a national search," said USD director of athletics David Herbster in the press release.

"We committed to con-

ducting a search process then, and we are following through with that commitment now."

The release did not provide a time table for the search, though Herbster said he believes USD could attract solid candidates.

"Our status as a Division I institution and our affiliation with the Summit League, along with the academic reputation of the University, makes this a highly attractive position," he said in the release. "We owe it to our student-athletes, fans and community to conduct a comprehensive and thorough search."

The Coyotes played the whole season realizing that a national search was likely at the conclusion, according to Gruis.

"You ask yourselves, 'If we

made a tournament run, would that be enough?," he said. "I don't know, that's up to Herbster and (senior associate athletic director David) Williams."

"Maybe they would have still opened it up if we won 30 games, I don't know."

James did not respond to a message from the Press & Dakotan on Tuesday.

Despite winning more overall games and more Summit League games than USD ever has since it joined the Summit League, James' team struggled down the stretch.

The Coyotes lost double-digit games at North Dakota and South Dakota State to close the regular season, and lost 71-55 to Denver in the first round of the Summit League Championships.

USD — which started the conference season 3-0 — par-

ticularly struggled on the road, going 2-15 in games away from the DakotaDome. That certainly didn't help, Gruis said.

"He was put in a tough position, and had to win," Gruis said. "I don't know if there was a magic number, but he had to win now."

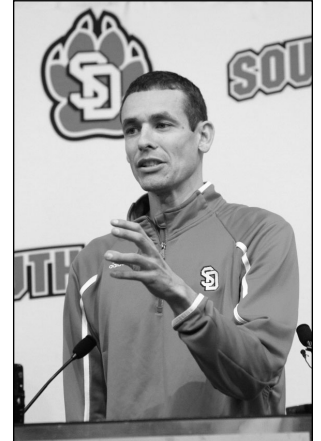
"Unfortunately we came up short in some of those games."

The conversation between the players was understandably a rough one, Gruis said.

"I told them they needed to settle down and wait for it to settle," he said. "They're obviously upset that coach James is leaving; they wanted to play for him."

That said, he added, if everyone returns — he said it's likely most will, if not

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P&D FILE PHOTO
University of South Dakota interim men's basketball coach Joey James speaks during the Coyotes' preseason media day. James, whose team went 12-18 and were eliminated in the opening round of the Summit League Tournament, will not return, according to an announcement on Tuesday.

Tri-Valley Trips Top-Seeded Parkston

BY ROB NIELSEN
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SALEM — The top-seeded Parkston Trojans brought 13-7 record into Tuesday night's District 5A title game, but were unable to advance past the sixth seeded Tri-Valley Trojans (9-11). The Trojans fell 59-46 to the Mustangs, sending Tri-Valley to the state playoffs for the first time since 2012.

Parkston coach Craig Bruening said despite the loss, he still believes there were some positives to the season.

"We had a good season," Bruening said. "We had our ups and downs. We played some tough teams and we had a couple of losses to very good teams in the Corn Palace that made us better for tonight. And tonight we just didn't shoot the ball very well and you're not going to win very many games when that happens, but overall you can't complain about a 13-7 record. I'm proud of my kids for what they did this year and accomplished and hopefully they'll learn some lessons and be back again next year."

An early Tri-Valley lead vanished in the first quarter,

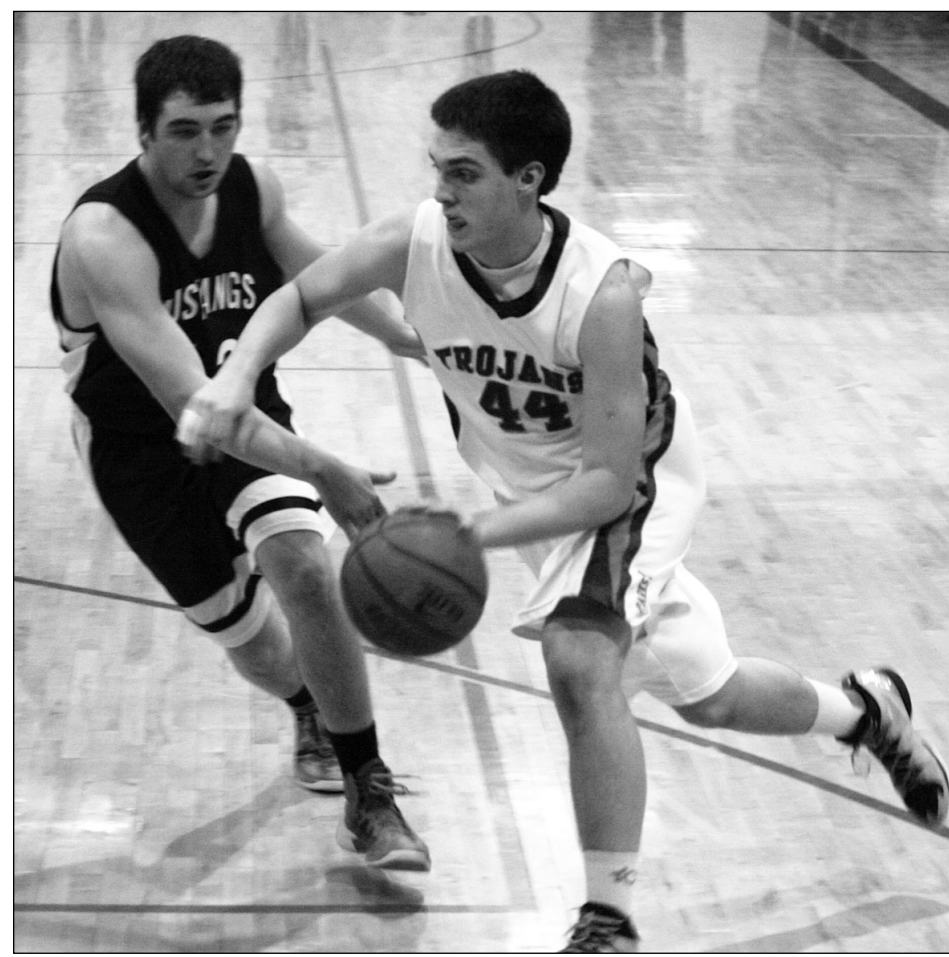
seeing the Trojans pull ahead to take a 17-11 lead by the quarter's end. The Mustangs then took control of the remainder of the half, starting the second quarter with a 11-1 run and eventually ending the first half up 24-20.

The second half got off to a promising note as senior Jalen Hurley sunk a three to pull the Trojans within one. Hurley would finish the night with five points. From there, the two teams battled for a lead for most of the third and into the fourth, the lead changing eight times before the Mustangs pulled away for good mid-way through the quarter.

Mustangs coach Rob Grady said the victory highlighted the team's resilience.

"In the middle of the year — about January — we got on a six-game losing streak," he said. "It was a time of year the weather was bad, we weren't practicing much, school was being called off and I just told the guys, 'keep your head up, keep battling'. They kept coming to practice, working hard and just kept getting better."

Bruening said he sees a



ROB NIELSEN/P&D
Parkston sophomore Dillan Thuringer challenges for a basket against the Tri-Valley Mustangs during the District 5A finals in Salem Tuesday night.

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Titans Upend Vermillion

BY PETER CHAPMAN
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HARRISBURG — The Tea Area Titans (15-5) have battled their way back to the Class A State Tournament beating the Vermillion Tanagers (17-5) 60-53 to clench the Region 4A championship title.

It was anyone's game at tip-off as Titans Tarin Smallfield and Jordan Fechner and Tanager Tyrell Harper made deep three-pointers quickly pushing the score higher. Smallfield kept the tempo of the game high, driving to the net as Fechner keeping defensive pressure to reduce the size advantage of the Tanagers.

"We knew that we needed to negate some of their size with our quickness," Tea coach Chris Fechner said. "Two weeks ago we changed our line-up, we went a little bit smaller not anticipating that we would be here; but it was a need that we needed to make."

In the first Period Fechner made a big steal for an easy basket to give the Titans their first lead of the game 21-20. Coming into the second period the Titans continued their push to lead as Gunnar Ensz made a basket off a defensive steal followed by two points by Fechner.

"We know we had to run the whole game cause they were taller than us," Smallfield said. "We had to keep running, keep pushing the ball and get easy buckets."

At the half, the Titans lead the Tanagers 37-32. Jordan Fechner scored 13 points in the first half with a big steal that gave Tea their first lead of the night. Also, Tarin Smallfield scored 10 points in the Titans' first half effort.

"I was yelling a lot don't shoot three's, but when they went in I was their biggest fan when they did," coach Fechner said, recalling the first period shoot out. "We haven't shot three's very well for quite a while, and we were about 63 percent from the three at the half; and its tuff to beat a team that's shooting that well."

Vermillion was down by five points at the half after the Titans scored 10 unanswered points in the second period. Harper scored 15 points for the Tanagers and Nick Jensen scored 10 points.

The Titans shut down Vermillion's lead scorer, Harper, holding him to five points in the second half to score 20 points for the night. Also for the tanagers, Jensen scored 13 points for the night.

"(Smallfield) has carried us point wise quite a bit of the year, he and Saber and Gunnar Ensz," coach Fechner said. "Jordan hit some big shots early, but we rely a lot on Terin, Ryan and Gunnar." In the win for the Titans, Smallfield led the team with 16 points, and Ryan Sabers and Fechner scored 13 points respectively.

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Everson Griffen Overly Eager To Pay Back Vikings

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Everson Griffen didn't want to entertain offers from other teams. His loyalty was with the Minnesota Vikings.

They stuck with him after his rookie year when he was arrested twice for unruly behavior in a three-day span. They supported him when his mother suddenly died in 2012. So he's determined to pay them back with the production to match the five-year, \$42.5 million contract they gave him with \$20 million in guaranteed money.

"They're holding me up to a higher expectation. They knew what I could do when they drafted me here in 2010, and now it's time for me to go out there and blossom with this team, with all of my boys," Griffen said Tuesday on a conference call. "It's time to go out there and celebrate on the field every single play, every single down. It means the world to me. It just means they trust in me."

As free agency formally began, amid

a flurry of headline-generating activity around the NFL, the Vikings finalized the contracts with Griffen and quarterback Matt Cassel that they agreed to over the weekend.

Minnesota also, according to ESPN, agreed to a five-year deal worth as much as \$31.5 million with nose tackle Linval Joseph. FoxSports.com first reported that deal, which will bring the 6-foot-4, 323-pound stalwart from the New York Giants to anchor new coach Mike Zimmer's defense. Joseph, a second-round pick out of East Carolina in 2010, averaged 55 tackles and three sacks over the last three seasons. He will fill a critical run-stopping spot on the line.

Griffen will handle the edge, along with returning starter Brian Robison, and replace the departed Jared Allen in the starting lineup. Griffen had 13 1/2 sacks over the last two years as a part-timer.

"Oh, man, I haven't even touched the

surface of what I can do," Griffen said. "I'm ready to work. I'm ready to listen. I'm going to absorb all of this knowledge that coach Zimmer is going to give me."

Griffen was almost beside himself with excitement in talking about his future. Though he's never played for Zimmer, or new defensive coordinator George Edwards or new defensive line coach Andre Patterson, Griffen sounded supremely confident in their ability to teach technique, devise a game plan and motivate the players — especially the head coach.

"He's going to pull the most out of you. He's going to find what you're made of. He's going to make sure that he gets the best out of this team," Griffen said, adding: "I just feel with his mastermind skills and what he brings to the table, he's going to use not just me, he's going to use every single player on the team the right way."

Platte-Geddes Wins Region 6B Championship

MITCHELL — Carter Dykstra's basket with eight seconds left lifted Platte-Geddes past Gregory 38-37 and into the state tournament after winning the Region 6B matchup Tuesday night at the Corn Palace in Mitchell.

Dykstra finished with 13 points for the Black Panthers, while Kole Heller added 10 points, eight assists and seven steals. Coby Johnson grabbed 11 rebounds.

In the season-ending loss for Gregory, Gavin Thomas had 12 points and eight rebounds, and Robert Vomacka had three assists.

GREGORY.....6 15 26 37
PLATTE-GEDDES.....11 26 29 38

Tornadoes Tame Pheasants, Earn State 'B' Berth

BY NICK ROBINSON
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TEA — The past few years Centerville has come close to going to the state tournament. Well, this year, the Centerville Tornadoes boys' basketball team is dancing.

Centerville was able to top the Parker Pheasants 54-50 in the Region 5B finale on Tuesday evening to secure their first bid in the state tournament since 2000.

"This feels absolutely awesome," Centerville head coach Cory Muller said. "We have been waiting for this around here for a long time. We have had a lot of great teams come out of this district and region in the past years, but the patience has paid off."

To start the game off, Mount Marty Lancer recruit Shamus O'Malley of Centerville (17-6) came off of a screen and made a wide-open three-pointer, but Parker answers right back with one of their own.

After that first possession, the Tornadoes went cold in the opening minutes of the first quarter. The Pheasants (18-5) went on a 7-0 run capped off by a deep Jake Anderson three-pointer forced Centerville to call a time-out halfway through the quarter.

"We play in a game of

runs," Muller said. "It's momentum basketball and we were nervous, but we knew we could battle back early and fight."

The Tornadoes responded, cutting the game to 12-10 thanks to O'Malley.

Centerville was able to retain the lead at 16-14 with 45 seconds left off a jumper from Josh DeRaad.

After one quarter, the contest was knotted at 16 a piece.

The second quarter starting off slow for both teams, as they were both trying to win the transition game.

With 3:30 left in the half, Zach O'Keefe for Parker found Reid Joffer down in the post to give the Pheasants a 20-18 lead.

Centerville responded with a trey-ball from DeRaad to retake the lead from Parker at 21-20.

A gritty and fast paced first half was won by Parker with the score at 28-27.

"The intensity was an absolute playoff game, it was very physical," Muller said. "We were lucky enough to play within ourselves in the first half to give ourselves a chance in the second half."

Anderson led the Pheasants with 14 points in the first half. Joffer added eight points respectively for Parker.

Seamus O'Malley led the Tornadoes with 10 points,

while Rory O'Malley added eight points and DeRaad added seven points for Centerville.

"We came out of the second half and really played our style of ball," Seamus O'Malley said. "I thought they really played to our hand as the game went on."

In the second half, up a point, Anderson, who's also a Lancer commit, connected on another three-pointer to give the Pheasants a 33-29 lead with 5:20 in the third quarter.

Rory O'Malley knotted the game up on a three-pointer at 35 a piece with 4:17 left in the third.

On two consecutive possessions, Anderson blocked two shots in the paint, which helped keep the game entrenched at 37 a piece.

The game was knotted at 37 a piece headed into the final period.

The fourth quarter was where the game was decided.

With 7:30 remaining in the game, after a very quiet third quarter, Seamus O'Malley sunk a trey-ball to give the Tornadoes a 40-37 lead.

The Tornadoes picked up their biggest lead of the game off of a fast break fadeaway jumper by DeRaad at 42-37 with 6:10 remaining.

Anderson, again, responded for the Pheasants as he drained a three-pointer to cut the lead down to 42-41

with 5:15 remaining.

With two minutes remaining O'Keefe snagged a steal from O'Malley, then went coast-to-coast to dish the ball to Ryan John, which tied the contest at 48.

"I have never played in a game like this before," O'Malley said. "It was so much fun, though."

Anderson bruised his way into the paint with a minute remaining, trashing the Tornado lead to 51-50.

With 20 seconds remaining, Seamus O'Malley hit two clutch free-throws to give Centerville a 53-50 lead.

"I thought Seamus kind of took over for us," Muller said. "He's going to do his part, but I think Rory played very well. It was very intense, it was what we worked for all year, was the moment like that. The kids came through with clutch shots."

Seamus O'Malley then stole the inbound pass, hit one free-throw, which sealed the deal for Centerville.

"I thought 'Wow, the game is over, we are finally going to state'," O'Malley said. "It still

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