

Pesicka Steps Down

Longtime Coach Resigns After 22 Seasons

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK
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Since 1975, the Yankton girls' basketball program has only had two different head coaches.

Next season, it will have another. Doug Pesicka, who completed his 22nd season at the helm of the Gazelles last month, has announced that he will step down from the program. A search for a new head coach will begin immediately, according to YHS Activities Director Ryan Mors.

"I had been thinking about it for a while. There was not one thing, one event or even one season that ultimately made me come to this decision," Pesicka said. "This was a decision that was very difficult to make. Probably the hardest thing I've ever had to do was walk into Mors' office and hand him my resignation."

During his career, he guided the Gazelles to a 278-225 record (.553), including a 3-18 mark this past season. He

coached the Gazelles to the 1996 state championship, a runner-up finish in 1994 and 14 state tournament appearances overall. He also served as an assistant for Bob Winter during the last seven years of Winter's 17-year stint at the helm of the Gazelles, and was also the head boys' basketball coach during the 1989-90 season, compiling a 5-15 record.

"One of the things I've always told our teams is that, no matter what kind of team you have, the basketball seasons has peaks and valleys, ups and downs," Pesicka said. "In the course of my career, the positives have far outweighed the negatives. I've been incredibly blessed with a number of good players and, more so, a lot of really, really good kids."

"When I step back and look at it, I wouldn't trade any of the experiences I've had with the program for the world."

One of the challenges he faced, and that his successor will face, is the na-

ture of head coaching in this era.

"Basketball's no longer a three-month season," he said. "It's almost a 24-7-365 thing. If you're a head coach, it's constantly on your mind. It never leaves you."

Counting his two seasons as the boys' basketball coach at Estelline, prior to his arrival in Yankton and his one season coaching the Bucks, Pesicka has exactly 300 career coaching victories.

Pesicka was the head coach for four of the top six in Gazelles scoring history, including Heather (Nelson) Olson, who was his top assistant this past season. Seeing her and others he coached — as well as his son, Tate — take up coaching has been "fun."

"It's neat to see Maggie Youngberg, Heather Olson, Emily Witte, Jenny Gudahl coaching," Pesicka said. "It's fun to see those kids that were in our program go on to do that stuff."

Mors, while just in his second year as activities director, has known Pesicka



P&D FILE PHOTO
Yankton head girls' basketball coach Doug Pesicka addressed the crowd during a state tournament sendoff for the 2010-11 Gazelles. Pesicka has resigned as head coach of the girls' basketball program, just the third head coach the program has had since beginning in the 1974-75 school year.

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Track & Field | Dan Lennon Class B

Meet Provides 'Unique' Challenge

BY JEREMY HOECK
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VERMILLION — The challenge of the annual Dan Lennon track meet gave area athletes a chance to test themselves against "unique" competition.

Lauren Sokolowski experienced that first hand.

The junior from Irene-Wakonda took second place in the girls' 60-meter hurdles and was one of the many highlights for area athletes during Tuesday's Class B meet at the DakotaDome.

"For the first meet, you really can't be disappointed," Sokolowski said. "You want to do your best, and just hope you finish in the top five."

The defending state champion in the 100 hurdles, Sokolowski called Tuesday's four-state meet "unique" — in the sense that she can run against new athletes from Iowa, Minnesota and Nebraska.

"You'd probably never see this girls again except here," said Sokolowski, who clocked a time of 9.47, finishing behind Jordyn Oostra of Sioux Falls Christian.

The Class B Most Valuable Performer was Mark Jarecki of Columbus Lakeview (Neb.), who won the 60-meter dash, 400-meter dash and anchored the champion 800-meter relay.

Still, despite being so early in the track season, some athletes found themselves doing better than they expected on Tuesday.

One of those performances came from Elk Point-Jefferson sophomore Josie Heeren. She won the girls' 1600-meter run in 5:35.48, well ahead of her goal.

"I didn't think I was ready, actually," said Heeren, who was aiming for 5:40. "I've only had six practices."

The combination of different competition and having a first meet indoors played a key role for Heeren, she said.

"It's good to see where you're at," Heeren said.

Joey Evans found he, too, was ahead of his early-season pace.



The senior from Andes Central won the boys' triple jump at 41-feet-3.75, more than two feet ahead of his goal.

"It was my last jump and everything," Evans said.

Evans, finished ahead of Colome's Terrance Kinzer, who was second at 40-10.50. So far so good this season for Evans, right?

"With the way it's started, I hope it gets better," he said. "Every practice has been inside so far this spring."

Improvement is also the goal for Scotland junior Carley Skorepa.

She took second place in the girls' shot put at 35-feet-3.25, behind Shandan Platt of Ainsworth (Neb.) who set a meet record at 43-7.

"I didn't throw my best, but whatever works, I guess," Skorepa said. "I was hoping to get 36 or 37 (feet), but I know there's still a long way to go."

Skorepa, who finished seventh at the state meet a year ago in the shot put, said she wants to finish at least third in 2014.

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Small Schools Start Their Seasons

A number of area schools were in the field as the Class B portion of the Dan Lennon Invitational was held on Tuesday at the DakotaDome.

ABOVE: Payton Johannesson of Andes Central clears the bar in the girls' high jump at Tuesday's Dan Lennon Class B track meet at the DakotaDome.

BELOW: Freeman's Grant Preheim competes in the boys' long jump at Tuesday's Dan Lennon Class B track meet at the DakotaDome.

JEREMY HOECK/P&D

Mosqueda-Lewis Triple Double Leads UConn Past Saint Joseph's

STORRS, Conn. (AP) — Kaleena Mosqueda-Lewis had the third triple-double in UConn history as the Huskies moved into their 21st straight NCAA regional semifinal with a 91-52 rout of Saint Joseph's on Tuesday night.

Mosqueda-Lewis had 20 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists, to lead five players in double figures for the top-

ranked Huskies (36-0), who won their 42nd straight game.

Breanna Stewart added 21 points and 11 rebounds, and Bria Hartley also chipped in 20 points for the defending national champions, who are trying to win a record ninth NCAA tournament.

Erin Shields and Sarah Fairbanks each had 12 points

to lead Saint Joseph's which finished the year at 23-10. Natasha Cloud had 10 and six assists for the Hawks.

UConn will face 12th-seeded BYU in Lincoln, Nebraska on Saturday. The Cougars upset Nebraska in the second round, sparing the Huskies a date with the Cornhuskers on their home court.

It was the 14th triple-double in NCAA tournament history.

Louisville Regional

MARYLAND 69, TEXAS 64: COLLEGE PARK, Md. (AP) — Alyssa Thomas scored all 16 of her points in the second half, and Maryland squeezed past cold-shooting Texas to reach the Sweet 16.

The fourth-seeded Terrapins (26-6) next face Tennessee, the No. 1 seed in the Louisville Regional. Maryland is 23-8

in the tournament under coach Brenda Frese and has reached the round of 16 in six of her 12 seasons at the helm.

Texas trailed by 11 points with 9:24 left, but an 8-0 run cut the deficit to 65-64 with 43 seconds left. After Maryland's 16th turnover of the game, Chassidy Fussell missed a 3-point try and Maryland's Laurin Mincy made two free throws for a three-point lead.

Nekia Jones then bounced a 3-point

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NCAA Basketball: Deflections A Key On Defense

PHOENIX (AP) — Defense-minded college basketball coaches love to praise players for deflections, a statistic that many swear by even though it isn't officially tracked.

"Deflections tells you how much energy you're playing with and how active your hands are," Arizona State associate head coach Eric Musselman said. "If you lack deflections, then you're probably not being a very aggressive team and you probably don't have very active hands."

Blocked shots, steals and the opponent's field goal percentage can be misleading, the coaches say. But deflections measure whether players stay close to their man or the ball and that they are active in passing lanes. And getting deflections can not only

lead to turnovers, it takes the offense out of their rhythm.

"You would hope that it led to a turnover, but at the end game, you're at least disrupting the opponent," Cincinnati coach Mick Cronin said. "But you don't necessarily have to get the turnover."

Though deflections don't show up in the box score, many coaches have a team manager or someone on the staff keep tabs during games and in breaking down film to see if their defense is active enough.

And coaches say they are the best defensive stat.

Getting a lot of steals can be great, but sometimes that means taking chances and being out of position. Fail to come up with the ball and the

other team could be racing off the other direction for a layup.

Same thing with blocked shots. Get a lot of 'em it's great, but go after every shot and miss a lot, the team is vulnerable to offensive rebounding.

Shooting percentages and turnovers are usually solid stats for defensive prowess. Still, those numbers can be skewed, too; the opposing team could just be missing open shots or being careless with the ball.

Get 40 deflections in a game — the benchmark for most teams — and you're going to win the game almost every time.

"There are so many things that the casual fan doesn't understand, things like deflections that don't show up in the box score but are important be-

cause they lead to something," longtime coach and television analyst Bill Frieder said. "Not only do you stop a possible basket, you might get a basket."

Though not every team tracks deflections, many of the best teams in the country play an aggressive style of defense, getting their hands on lots of balls to disrupt the opponent's offense and create opportunities for themselves.

Louisville won a national championship last year thanks, in part, to its in-the-jersey defense. Virginia Commonwealth has become a mid-major power with its relentlessness on defense, leading the nation in steals and forcing turnovers with quick hands. Michigan State is in the Sweet 16

for the 12th time in 17 seasons because of its active defense. Arizona has been arguably the nation's best defensive team this season and heads to the Sweet 16 this week as a popular pick to win it all after overwhelming Gonzaga with its arm-waving pressure in Sunday's third-round game.

"When you think of teams like San Diego State, VCU, Louisville, those teams create offense through their defense and it starts with being active, playing with a great deal of energy, guarding the ball tightly and having active hands," Musselman said.

Tracking deflections, at least to many coaches, is the best way to figure out if that's happening.

USD Football Finishes 2014 Season Slate

BY JEREMY HOECK
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VERMILLION — Adding an NAIA game to fill out its 2014 football schedule wasn't exactly idea for the University of South Dakota, but options were running thin, according to athletic director David Herbster.

USD announced Tuesday a 12-game schedule for this fall, highlighted by a season opener at Oregon and the home opener the next week against NAIA William Penn (Iowa).

There were two open dates on the schedule, Sept. 6 and Sept. 27, but athletic department officials preferred to fill the first vacancy, Herbster said.

"It really was all about timing and filling out a schedule," he said Tuesday.

"We're not the only ones in that boat, and we're certainly not the last team to round out a schedule."

And so, USD was able to finalize a \$55,000 guarantee to bring in William Penn. The Coyotes last played the Statesmen in 2009, when they won 52-0.

"The tough part about games like this is that you're limited in Division II games in this game," Herbster said. "The further away you get, the more money you have to pay."

USD could have ventured out to the East Coast or down in Texas to land a home game, Herbster said, but the cost would have been too high.

There was also an option that USD could have scheduled a road game for the 12th slot, Herbster said.

"But it's important for us and for our fans to have six home games," he said.

The Coyotes will also host Northern Arizona (Sept. 20), Northern Iowa for Dakota Days (Oct. 11), North Dakota State (Oct. 25), Western Illinois (Nov. 8) and Illinois State (Nov. 22).

Road games include Oregon (Aug. 30), Montana (Sept. 13), Southern Illinois (Oct. 4), Missouri State (Oct. 18), Youngstown State (Nov. 1) and South Dakota State (Nov. 22).

Southern Illinois replaced Indiana State on the Missouri Valley Football Conference rotation for the Coyotes.

USD still has one opening for 2015 and is looking to start a series at home in 2016, Herbster said. The other non-conference game for 2016 is against North Dakota.

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