

Area Teams Headed To State

Crofton Girls Look To Cap Unbeaten Season With Fourth Straight Title

BY JEREMY HOECK
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CROFTON, Neb. — Quinn Wragge, Maria Wortmann and Allison Arens have all been front and center for the Crofton girls' basketball team during its run of three consecutive state titles.

Now the three seniors are looking for one more.

Top-seeded Crofton (26-0), which has won 50 games in a row, begins that quest today (Thursday) against Ponca in the Class C2 first round at the Nebraska State Girls' Basketball Tournament in Lincoln.

"There are so many lasts this year," said Wragge, who transferred to Crofton before her sophomore year. "I can't wrap my brain around it, that it's my last time to play for this team."

The Lady Warriors, who have won 84 of their last 85 games, are also looking for their seventh state title in 11 years — though it's only the last three that the three seniors can relate to.

And so, the players are understandably anxious to



P&D FILE PHOTO
The Crofton bench celebrates a made three-pointer by the Warriors during their girls' basketball game against Sioux Falls Washington in the Sanford Pentagon Classic in December. Crofton, the three-time defending Class C2 champions, will go for a fourth straight crown when it takes the court in the Nebraska State Tournament, which begins today (Thursday) in Lincoln.

CROFTON | PAGE 8

Lady Blue Devils Continue Drive For Five In D2

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WYNOT, Neb. — Despite winning 20 games and qualifying for state for a sixth consecutive year, the Wynot High School girls' basketball team was, about a month ago, still waiting for everything to click.

"I knew we had another level in us, but I didn't know if we could get them to that level," head coach Steve Wieseler said.

"It happens every year. You want to play even better than you are."

Eventually, it all came together for the Blue Devils (20-5).

Wynot, the No. 2 seed in Class D2, will open their pursuit of a fifth straight state title tonight (Thursday) against Hampton at the Nebraska State Tournament in Lincoln.

Since a 29-point output in a loss Jan. 22 to Guardian Angels Central Catholic, the Blue Devils (20-5) won eight of their next nine games to reach the state tournament.

"We've been working more as a team, more for each other," sophomore Cortney Arkfeld said. "It always happens every year, toward the end, we get better."

And it's been the same story for five years.

Wynot, with a 145-21 record since 2009, has reached the state championship game in five consecutive years, winning the last four.

"We know that more people will be after us, especially this year," Arkfeld said. "They'll want to beat us. It'll be a battle, but we're ready for it."

With the full-court, pressure defensive style Wynot uses, it's always proven to be effective at the state tournament. And even that area has improved of late, Wieseler said.

"We're playing with a little more passion and heart; playing together a little better," he said. "We were treading water there for a while, but we're definitely playing as

WYNOT | PAGE 8



P&D FILE PHOTO
Wynot's Cortney Arkfeld defends Wakefield's Savannah Nelson during their opening round game in the Lewis & Clark Conference girls' basketball tournament. Wynot will be gunning for a fifth straight Class D2 championship when the Nebraska State Tournament begins today (Thursday) in Lincoln.

PONCA | PAGE 8

Nebraska QB Told To Be Ready For More Passing, Less Running

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Tommy Armstrong Jr. remains Nebraska's No. 1 quarterback heading into coach Mike Riley's first spring practice with the Cornhuskers.

Besides that, the offense is going to look much different as Riley and coordinator Danny Langsdorf begin installing a pro-style system.

Armstrong, who'll be a junior this fall, got that message in his initial meeting with Langsdorf.

"First thing he told me," Armstrong said Wednesday, "was that I'm not going to be a running back."

Designed quarterback runs,

zone-read keepers and times he fled when protection broke down accounted for most of Armstrong's 145 rushing attempts out of last year's multiple offense. In Riley's offense at Oregon State, Sean Manion had 48 rushing attempts last year, with all but a few of those the result of sacks.

Riley said Armstrong's skill set lends itself to having some quarterback run game at his disposal, and the coach is excited about the possibilities. But it won't be nearly as prevalent as it was in the past at Nebraska.

"He wants me to sit in the pocket, deliver the ball when I can and make smart decisions," Armstrong said of Langsdorf. "That's what we've been working on."

Riley said he would divide the team into two groups for spring practices so he and his assistants can familiarize themselves with and better evaluate the players. The coaches will conduct two separate practices each day, with about 60 players on Team Red and 60 on Team White. There will be a special-teams session for all players in between the two main practices.

"I just think it's best for the players to have an opportunity to get coached and get some repetitions," Riley said. "I didn't want to have a team period where 22 guys were competing and 100 guys were watching."

The Huskers will practice 15 times, with the final one being the annual Red-White Game on April 11.

The offense was given the playbook about 10 days ago. Armstrong said it's his understanding he'll take half the snaps from under center and half out of shotgun. Another change, Armstrong said, is that the

offense will huddle after most plays.

Armstrong, who played in a pro-style offense his sophomore and junior years of high school, said polishing his footwork would be an emphasis.

"That was the key to all my things I made mistakes on," he said. "My upper body and my lower body weren't in the right rhythm. One time my footwork may be really fast, but my upper body is slow. So that's kind of when the accuracy level of my balls went down."

HUSKERS | PAGE 8

Five Lancer Women Earn All-GPAC Recognition



P&D FILE PHOTO
Mount Marty senior guard April Winne was named second-team all-GPAC on Wednesday.

Basketball: Smith Honored For MMC Men

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK
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Five members of the Mount Marty College women's basketball team and one member of the MMC men's team were recognized by the Great Plains Athletic Conference, which announced its all-GPAC basketball teams on Wednesday.

Senior April Winne and junior Alex Kneeland were each selected to the second team for the Lancer women. Senior Holly Hegge and juniors Raquel Sutura and Cassidy Gebhart earned honorable mention selections.

"It's impressive. We're happy about that," said Mount Marty women's basketball coach Tom Schlimgen. "We had two second-teamers and three honorable mentions, so we had some votes at all spots."

Senior guard Bud Smith earned honorable mention recognition on the men's side.

Winne averaged 12.1 points per game and recorded 102 assists. Her 130 made free throws were more than double that of her next closest teammate. She went over 1,000 career points in the final game of the regular season.

"This is a nice award for her," Schlimgen said of Winne, who sat out the 2013-14 season due to injury. "She brings a lot of toughness to the floor. She will be somebody we miss."

Kneeland led MMC offensively, averaging 16 points per game and hitting a team-best 87 three-pointers for a Lancer squad that drained a school-record 299 from outside on the season. She also had 52 assists to rank third on the team in that category.

"Alex is a really good offensive player," Schlimgen said. "She continues to get better on the defensive end."

Hegge averaged 9.6 points and 5.7 rebounds

per game. She led the team with 20 blocked shots and 52 steals.

"Holly was a nice four-year player and an excellent defender who scored when we needed her to," Schlimgen said. "She could defend a post or a perimeter player."

Sutura averaged 10.1 points and 7.4 rebounds per game. Her 40 steals ranked second on the team.

"Raquel has had three really good years," Schlimgen said of Sutura, who has 810 career points and 502 career rebounds. "She was great down the stretch. She's a tough kid with high energy."

"We're glad to have her back for another year."

Gebhart averaged just 4.4 points per game, but she led the team with 104 assists.

"She's someone our kids love to play with. She's a pass-first player, but she has the ability to



P&D FILE PHOTO
Mount Marty junior guard Alex Kneeland was named second-team all-GPAC on Wednesday.

ALL-GPAC | PAGE 8