

Summit League Tourney Begins Today

Coyote Women Aim For Return Trip To NAAs



P&D FILE PHOTO
South Dakota women's basketball coach Amy Williams, holding basketball, and her team acknowledge the fans after receiving the championship trophy from the 2014 Summit League Tournament. The Coyotes begin the defense of their title today (Saturday) at the Denny Sanford Premier Center.

BY JEREMY HOECK
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VERMILLION — Over the past 12 months, the University of South Dakota women's basketball team has checked off all three major accomplishments in the Summit League. Post-season tournament title. NCAA Tournament bid. And now, regular season crown.

The next task for the top-seeded Coyotes (23-6)? Repeat as champs in the Summit League tournament,

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South Dakota Men Aim High

BY JEREMY HOECK
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VERMILLION — Craig Smith has made clear since day one of his tenure at the University of South Dakota that he intends to guide the men's basketball program to the NCAA Tournament.

And, as he and his players have maintained all season, sooner rather than later. "I know it's a really lofty goal, we fully understand that, but our guys believe it, and we believe it," said Smith, who was hired away from Nebraska — where he helped guide the Huskers to the 'Big Dance.'

"I'd rather be a good team playing great than a great team playing good. And I'm not



P&D FILE PHOTO
South Dakota's Tyler Larson kicks the ball out to a waiting teammate during a home game earlier this season.

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Wynot Drive For Five Continues

Wynot Earns Sixth Straight Title Berth With Wieseler's 300th Coaching Win

BY JEREMY HOECK
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LINCOLN, Neb. — Steve Wieseler admits that he's "not an individual stats guy."

Even moments after recording his 300th career win, the Wynot girls' basketball coach not only deflected the accomplishment back to his players but had to take a minute to remember how long he's been coaching.

"Seventeen years," Wieseler said, after his Blue Devils beat Sandhills-Thedford 42-32 in Friday afternoon's Class D2 semifinal at the Nebraska State Tournament in Lincoln.

And for the sixth consecutive year in that tenure, his program will play for a state championship.

After being serenaded with a chant of 'three-hundred' from the Wynot fans in the Devaney Center stands, Wieseler was more ready to talk about his team's grind-it-out performance.

"I'm sure some day I'll look back and think 'Wow,'" he said.

"I told the girls when they congratulated me, 'It's great, but this win you had today out-weighs that 300 by far.'"

Did the veteran coach — with five titles to his credit — know he was approaching 300 wins?

"I assume he knew," said a smiling Jenna Heine.

The victory sends the four-time defending champion Blue Devils (22-5) to Saturday's 4:30 p.m. state championship game against Falls City Sacred Heart.

"It means a lot," Heine said. "It's definitely a great feeling every time we get back there."

Wieseler was asked how this season's team differs from previous years, and his response centered on the obstacles Wynot had to overcome.

"It's a different season, and you have all kinds of challenges and frustrations and excitements," he said, "and you never know if you'll



ABOVE: Wynot head coach Steve Wieseler high fives his players near the end of Friday's Class D2 semifinal win over Sandhills-Thedford at the Nebraska State Girls' Basketball Tournament in Lincoln. The victory was the 300th in Wieseler's career.
BELOW: Wynot's Cortney Arkfeld, center, goes up for a shot between two Sandhills-Thedford defenders during their Class D2 semifinal game Friday at the Nebraska State Girls' Basketball Tournament in Lincoln.

get them to this point.

"This is one of those years."

Even a team like Wynot isn't immune to frustrations, Wieseler pointed out.

Early in the fourth quarter, with the Blue Devils holding a 36-28 lead, they pulled the ball out to eat some clock — "took the air out of the ball," as the coach put it.

"I thought, 'Man, this is tough for us right now,'" Wieseler said. "You see that at times in the state tournament. Its' tough to play great three days in a row."

It's in those moments where the experience of having played in multiple state title games is a huge factor, players said.

"It helps a lot," said junior guard Danielle Wieseler, who scored a team-high 13 points.

"It takes away some of the nerves, and we have a little edge on the other teams."

Another edge for the Blue Devils was their defensive pressure.

Wynot used an 8-0 spurt in

the first quarter to take a lead it would never give back — despite Sandhills-Thedford getting to within six points with 1:41 left in the game.

"We had to work really hard and push the ball," Danielle Wieseler said. "We wanted to wear them out a little bit because we knew they could get winded really fast."

Heine scored 11 points for Wynot, while sophomore Carissa Kuchta added eight points and junior Olivia Wieseler had three points.

Up next for the Blue Devils is a familiar opponent: Top-seeded Falls City Sacred Heart (27-2). The two programs have met twice in the state tournament in the past three years.

"Hopefully we can give them some problems with our defense," coach Wieseler said.

You can follow Jeremy Hoeck on Twitter at twitter.com/jhoeck. Discuss this story at www.yankton.net.



Crofton Girls To Play For Fourth Straight Class C2 Title

BY JEREMY HOECK
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LINCOLN, Neb. — Eventually, in time, the way Crofton plays, opponents get worn down.

Guardian Angels Central Catholic was the latest to experience that first-hand.

In what was once a relatively close game, the Lady Warriors rolled past the Bluejays 56-35 in Friday night's Class C2 semifinals at the Nebraska State Girls' Basketball Tournament in Lincoln.

Defensive pressure. Transition.

Those were the same areas that propelled three-time defending champion Crofton (28-0) to a fifth consecutive state title game, tonight (Saturday) at 8:30 p.m. against Hastings St. Cecilia.

"It wears on a team's mental state to just have us in your face the whole game like that," said head coach Aaron Losing, whose team has now won 52 straight games.

"And our kids enjoy doing it."

With a narrow 13-9 lead early in the second quarter and playing far from a clean game, Crofton reeled off 12 straight points thanks to those two key facets of its game.

"We just try to keep the press on and force some turnovers, and then transition as much as we can," said senior Allison Arens, who scored 15 points. "Keep them running."

"Coach keeps subbing us in and out, and a lot of teams can't keep up with that."

A 9-1 run to start the third quarter only ballooned Crofton's lead, and its defense never really let GACC get back in the game.

"That's the whole style of play we bring to the table," Losing said. "If we're not going to force turnovers, that's how we're going to get ourselves in trouble."

But that hasn't been the

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Bucks Stay Alive, Beat Lynx

BY EMILY NIEBRUGGE
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Everything — a strong offense, defense and balanced scoring — came together Friday night for the Yankton Bucks to secure them a third-place regional finish and a district game next week against Watertown at home.

Yankton pulled off a 47-34 win in the district 2AA consolation game against the Brandon Valley Lynx Friday night at the Summit Activities Center.

"We said all year that we didn't know how good we were going to be, but have a group of good kids who are willing to work hard and take care of each other," said Yankton's head coach Chris Haynes following the win.

That dedication can be seen evidently in each of the players, each of whom stepped up to grab the Friday night victory.

"I had confidence in my team," junior forward Bradey Sorenson said. "We've been em-



JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D
Yankton's Evan Greeneway is fouled by Brandon Valley's Tyler Erck as Greeneway puts the ball in during the third place game of the District 2AA boys' basketball tournament on Friday at the Summit Center.

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