

USD Men Advance To Semifinals



James Hunter, 50, of USD expresses excitement as Steve Forbes of Fort Wayne looks on in the first half of their second round Summit League Championship Tournament game Sunday evening at the Denny Sanford Premier Center in Sioux Falls.

DAVE EGGEN/INERTIA

Coyotes Draw Top-Seeded Jackrabbits Tonight

BY JEREMY HOECK
jeremy.hoeck@yankton.net

SIoux FALLS — "Let's eat" has been a popular social media theme this season for the University of South Dakota men's basketball team.

Its three seniors sure played hungry. And now their squad is in a position to face their rival in a semifinal showdown.

"It's not time to celebrate," said Brandon Bos, who scored a career-high 29 points in an 82-73 first round win Sunday night at the Summit League Tournament in Sioux Falls.

"We've got two more." It sets up a semifinal date tonight (Monday) at 6 p.m. against No. 1 seed South

Dakota State in what should be a raucous atmosphere.

Not bad for the pre-season eighth pick.

"That's what we use as motivation for the whole season," junior Casey Kasperbauer said. "We put a really big focus on going one game at a time."

The Coyotes (17-15) needed exactly that mindset to withstand a furious rally.

Up by as many as 21 points in a near-flawless first half, USD watched the Mastodons get all the way to within 74-69 with 70 seconds left. The Coyotes then scored their final 10 points at the free throw line to secure the win.

Or, in other words, a similar story for the Coyotes.

"We haven't handled pros-

perity great, but we've always responded great to adversity," head coach Smith said.

It was by far the most complete half of the season for the Coyotes.

Sixty-three percent shooting. Thirteen assists on 17 baskets. Twelve points from James Hunter, who came in averaging five.

Together, those edges led to a 44-23 halftime lead for USD, which used a 24-3 surge over eight minutes to take control.

The catalysts for the Coyotes were Bos, who had 19 points in the first half, while senior James Hunter had 12 of his career-high 16 in the frame.

Top-Seeded USD Women Drop 'Dons

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK
james.cimburek@yankton.net

SIoux FALLS — Nicole Seekamp helped South Dakota survive its opening round test, recording 10 points and an assist in the final 4:12 to lead the Coyotes to a 78-70 victory over Fort Wayne in the Summit League women's basketball tournament on Saturday at the Denny Sanford Premier Center.

"We knew it wasn't going to be easy. This time of year it never is easy," said USD head coach Amy Williams after the victory.

"Fort Wayne is an extremely scrappy team. We knew they were going to fight for 40 minutes, and they did not disappoint."

Seekamp finished with 25 points and eight assists, both game highs. Raeshel Contreras hit four three-pointers for her 12 points. Kelly Stewart had her first career double-double, posting 11 points and 11 rebounds in the victory.

"We talked all week that rebounding would be key. Kelly came in on a mission," Williams said of the junior guard. "It was a special performance out there."

For Fort Wayne, which finished with a 9-21 record, Haley Seibert scored 21 points and Kamillah Carter scored 20 points off the bench. Keanna Gary added 14 points.

USD built a 15-12 advantage with strong inside play, including two baskets and three trips to the line in the game's early minutes.

But Fort Wayne countered with standout Haley Seibert, who single-handedly scored the first eight points of an 11-0 Mastadons run for a 23-15 lead.

While USD struggled from the field, scoring one field goal in a seven-minute span, it closed the gap from the line with 10 straight made free throws to end the half. A Margaret McCloud basket in the post capped an 8-0 run that

also

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Four-Tune Shines On Crofton

Crofton Rallies For Fourth Straight C2 Championship

BY JEREMY HOECK
jeremy.hoeck@yankton.net

LINCOLN, Neb. — All of those grueling, high-intensity practices in December once again paid off in March for the Crofton girls' basketball team.

It's all by design, says head coach Aaron Losing.

"If kids can get through our practices, in many cases, game situations are easier," said Losing, whose Lady Warriors captured their fourth consecutive state title by rallying past Hastings St. Cecilia 48-39 Saturday night at the Nebraska State Tournament.

The latest of 53 straight wins was anything but easy for Crofton, however.

Not only did the Lady Warriors not score a point in the first quarter, they actually found themselves behind in the fourth quarter for the first time this season.

And yet, there was no panic.

"We practice mental toughness, and that was huge in this game," senior Quinn Wragge said. "We have to stay strong. It's that next play to keep going."

That's exactly what the



JEREMY HOECK/P&D

Crofton head coach Aaron Losing celebrates a three-pointer during Saturday night's Class C2 championship game at the Nebraska State Girls' Basketball Tournament in Lincoln.

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Falls City Sacred Heart Denies Wynot Fifth Straight State Title

BY JEREMY HOECK
jeremy.hoeck@yankton.net

LINCOLN, Neb. — Jenna Heine was in an unfamiliar position. She had to talk about coming up just short on the state's biggest stage.

Heine, a senior on the Wynot girls' basketball team, and her teammates had never lost in the Nebraska State Tournament.

Until Saturday, when Falls City Sacred Heart ended the Blue Devils' bid for a fifth consecutive Class D2 state championship.

"I'm just really proud of our girls," Heine said after the 45-39 loss at Pinnacle Bank Arena.

"We fought hard. I'm really proud of our team."

Wynot (22-6), playing in its sixth consecutive final, was trying to become the third school in state history to win at least five straight titles — Sandy Creek and

South Sioux City both won six in a row.

And the Blue Devils nearly made an impressive comeback to do so.

Falls City Sacred Heart, which had finished third at state the previous two years, led 40-33 with 2:22 to play in the fourth quarter.

Wynot, though, got consecutive three-pointers from Heine and junior Danielle Wieseler to get within 40-39 with 37 seconds left. The Irish, however, closed with four foul shots to win.

"Our kids never give up," said Wynot head coach Steve Wieseler, who won his 300th career game Friday. "They play hard, they work hard."

"We won a couple games this year where we came back, so that didn't surprise me."

Experience of having been in so many close games on that stage no doubt helped the Blue Devils.

"We were really never too far behind, and we had confidence we could come back," Heine said. "We fought until the end."

Wynot just couldn't find an answer for Maggie Goltz, a 6-foot-1 junior forward for Falls City Sacred Heart. After being held to five points Friday, she finished with 20 points and eight rebounds in the title game.

"If you look at the stats, maybe it isn't the best, but she's got the complete game," coach Wieseler said. "She's a complete ball player."

In the loss for the Blue Devils, Danielle Wieseler scored 10 points and dished out four assists, while sophomore Courtney Arkfeld added six points, six rebounds and two assists.

But it was the play — and leadership — of Heine (16 points) that even gave Wynot a chance for a fifth straight

title, its coach said.

"I know it's going to hurt for her," coach Wieseler said. "She's seen her older sisters win their final game. It's going to be hard."

Heine, though, said she has no regrets from her basketball career.

"It was great," she said. "It was an awesome opportunity to be a part of. I couldn't ask for anything more."

Wynot will graduate four seniors, Heine, Kristi Bruening, Melissa Schram and Lacey Heimes. They will also return a solid nucleus of Danielle Wieseler, Olivia Wieseler, Courtney Arkfeld, Skylar Arkfeld, Carissa Kuchta, as well as a trio of freshmen who saw action.

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



JEREMY HOECK/P&D

Wynot's Danielle Wieseler dribbles through the Falls City Sacred Heart defense of Elizabeth Magdanz, center, and Sara Wertenberger during Saturday's Class D2 championship game at the Nebraska State Girls' Basketball Tournament in Lincoln.



JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

Yankton's Zane Weidenbach holds up the fifth place trophy of the South Dakota Amateur Hockey Association's JV boys' tournament after the Bucks earned it with a 3-2 victory over Oahe on Sunday at Alcoa Arena.

SDAHA JV Boys: Bucks Battle Past Oahe For Fifth

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK
james.cimburek@yankton.net

The Yankton Bucks capped a weekend flourish with a 3-2 victory over Oahe in the consolation final of the South Dakota Amateur Hockey Association's JV boys' tournament on Sunday at Alcoa Arena.

"We knew we were hosting the tournament, and we wanted to make a name for ourselves," said Yankton's Austin Barger, who recorded an assist in the finale. "The whole team came together very well."

Colby Benson converted a Trey Bakke pass in the opening period, but Oahe answered early in the sec-

ond period with a Kaidyn Eaton goal off a Zach Fendrich pass to tie the game.

Yankton scored just 10 seconds into the third period to regain the lead, but Oahe's Tyler Scott answered just over a minute later. With 9:40 left, Barger found Tate O'Hara in front of the goal, and his only goal of the tournament proved to be the game-winner.

Acting coach Zach Benson was happy with the finish by his squad.

"I just think the kids didn't want to lose on their home ice," he said. "They really stepped up for us."

Zane Weidenbach made

42 saves in earning the victory. Brody Hultman made 16 saves for Oahe.

After going 4-12 in the JV regular season, the Bucks went 3-1 on the weekend and finished in fifth place. Yankton entered the tournament seeded eighth.

"It was good to see the kids playing their best hockey," Coach Benson said. "We're hoping to see a lot of summer hockey, keeping pucks on sticks, then come back and do better next year."

You can follow James D. Cimburek on Twitter at twitter.com/JCimburek. Discuss this story at www.yankton.net.

Rangers Blank Rushmore For Title

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK
james.cimburek@yankton.net

The Brookings Rangers pounded the nets, outshooting Rushmore 42-11 on the way to a 2-0 victory over the Thunder in the championship in the South Dakota Amateur Hockey Association's JV boys' state tournament, which concluded on Sunday at Alcoa Arena.

After a scoreless first period, Kirby Selleck fired back a rebound nine minutes into the second period to give Brookings the

lead. While the goal was not officially signaled for several seconds, Selleck was confident that was good.

"As soon as I hit it I knew I was going in," he said after the game. "Someone hit my stick out of my hand, but I didn't need to turn around to see it. I knew."

Nearly four minutes later, Brookings' Johnny Hockett found the net to give the Rangers a cushion.

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