

Hoeck: Through It All, USD Women Handled Pressure

BY JEREMY HOECK

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One of the areas that stands out most to me when thinking about the 2014-15 season for the USD women's basketball team are the many taglines and lines of motivation.

One Team, One Dream. Sustained success. "Can you stand the rain?" (a song introduced to the team by coach Amy Williams).

To name a few. But now, the day after the season ended for the Coyotes in the second round of the WNIT, it's clear: What stood out was the start-to-finish success; that "sustained success" Williams loved to talk about.

There was no up and down start to the season. There was no 0-4

start to the Summit League season. There was no need for a late-season push like previous seasons.

The Coyotes, in year three under Williams, were the top team in the conference from start to finish, all the way until the Summit League championship game when South Dakota State captured the title.

That's what stands out to me: USD withstood the nerve-wracking moniker of "favorite." Sure, the Coyotes — with three



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all-conference players and significant depth — were the pre-season No. 2 pick behind SDSU coming into the conference season. Even back in November, you could've put good money down that the Jacks and Coyotes would meet for the league crown, and probably be rich today.

Truth is, you never really know how a team handles that kind of pressure. USD had been to the previous two Summit League championship games, but suddenly (following a trip to the NCAA Tournament) there were expectations. A first-round loss in the league tournament wouldn't cut it.

That's what was facing the veteran team back in November. With five of the first six games of the season on the road (and later, five of

the first seven league games), how would the Coyotes come out of the gates?

An 8-point loss at Kansas, followed four days later by a 14-point loss at Washington, followed 10 days later by a win at Marquette, proved that maybe USD would be a tick better than the previous season. Then came a 5-game homestand when the Coyotes proved that, if nothing else, their offense would certainly be better.

Thing is, that never really slowed down.

In reaching at least 80 points in nine of 16 regular season Summit League games, the Coyotes were ranked in the top-10 nationally most of the season — finishing with an average of 77.2 points a game. Seniors Nicole Seekamp (15.6) and

Raeshel Contreras (14.9) led the way, but six others averaged at least five points.

The veteran nature of the team's makeup led the Coyotes to also average 15.8 assists a game, which was something the players always seem to mention in post-game interviews: The team was unselfish. They certainly didn't care who scored, as long as someone did.

Along the way, there just weren't very many slip-ups. And when there were, the issues were similar.

In league play, a 16-point loss at Oral Roberts (USD shot 32 percent, 3-of-11 from deep, 21 turnovers), a 25-point loss at IUPUI (USD shot 33 percent, 2-of-13 from deep, 21

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High School Track I Dan Lennon Invitational

'Well-Rounded' Bucks Shine

Yankton Boys Record Eight Top-5 Finishes At DakotaDome

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK

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VERMILLION — When the Yankton track and field opened the indoor portion of its season a week ago, head coach Luke Youmans felt good about the girls' performance, but felt the boys' team needed to do better.

This week they flipped the script.

Yankton's boys took home eight top-five finishes to lead the way at the Dan Lennon Invitational on Monday at the DakotaDome in Vermillion.

"Last week we left feeling good about the girls," Youmans said. "The boys came out today and looked like the well-rounded team that we felt they could be. The guys have been competitive in about every event on the track and in the field events."

Leading the way for the Bucks was the foursome of Charlie Stephenson, Lee Rose, Ryan Sternhagen and Mason Strahl, who finished second in the 800 relay (1:37.45) and third in the 1600 relay (3:34.68). Rose was also fourth in the long jump (20-5), while Stephenson placed fifth in the 60-meter hurdles (8.92).

The Bucks also took home two medals in the shot put, with Nick Raab (46-11) placing third and Evan Greenway (45-5) placing fifth.

For Raab, who also took home a top finish at the Bob Prince Indoor last week, it was an improvement in performances.

"I felt pretty good today. The most important thing was that I improved on my best throws, and I did that today," he said. "I'm hoping to keep making improvements and make it on the podium at state."



Yankton's Charlie Stephenson competes in the semis of the boys' 60-meter hurdles at the Dan Lennon Invitational on Monday at the DakotaDome in Vermillion.

For Greenway, it was a career-best performance after only his second practice of the season.

"I wasn't sure how it was going to go," he said. "This will definitely build up confidence for the rest of the year."

Also for the Bucks, Joseph Kelly finished third in the pole vault (12-0), Matt Fitzgerald finished fifth in the high jump (5-10) and Chris Kinsley finished seventh in the triple jump (40-5).

For the Gazelles, senior Danielle Beckman placed fourth in the 400 (1:01.90) and helped the 1600 and medley relays to top eight finishes.

"I improved from last week's time, but there still is

a lot of things to work on," she said. "It's a good start to the season."

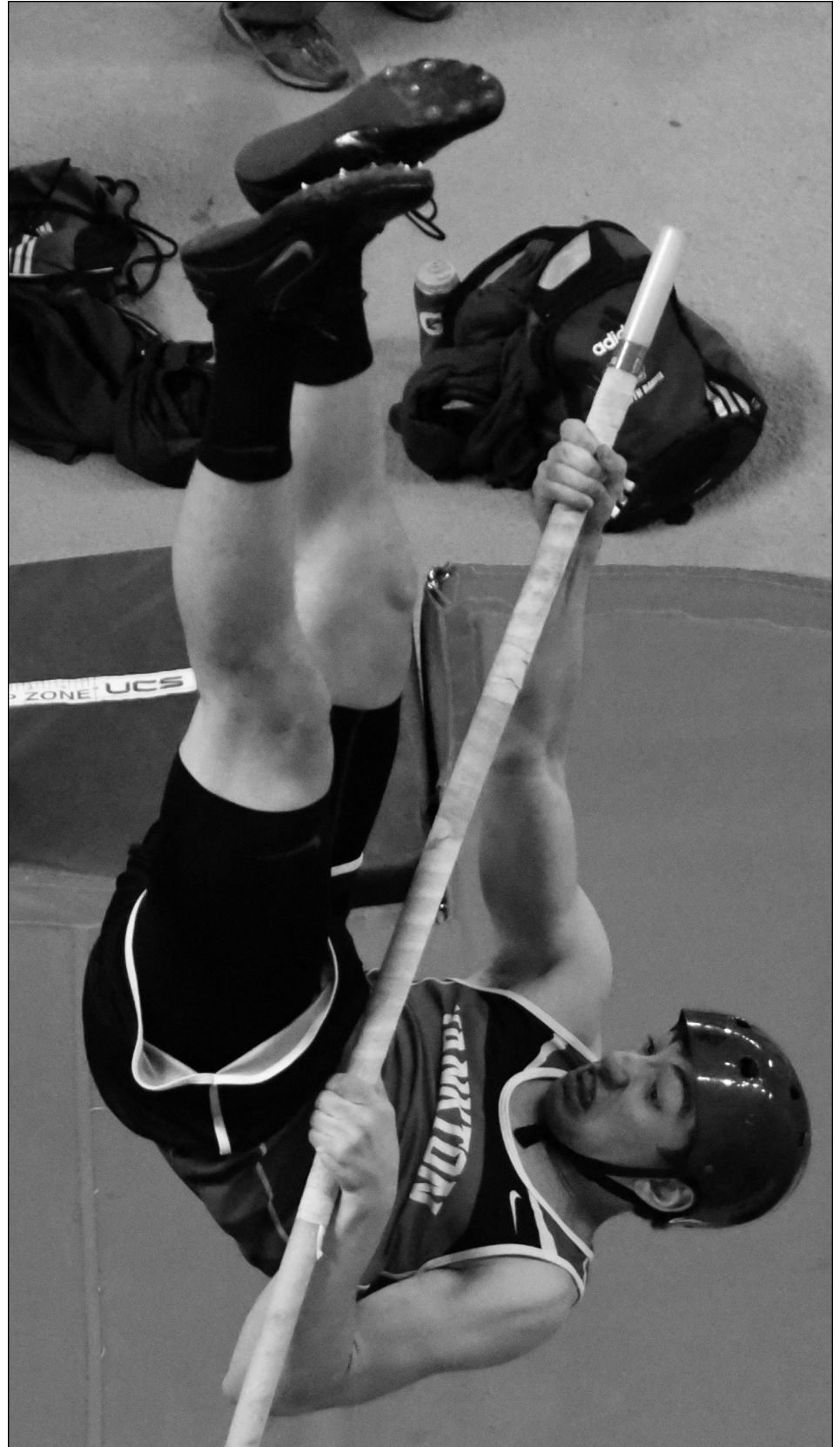
Lauren Graves, Madason Tessier and Erica Westerman teamed with Beckmann on a fifth place finish in the 1600 relay (4:23.75). Graves, Westerman and Rebecca Moser teamed with Beckmann on an eighth place finish in the medley (4:36.46).

"We have entirely new relays, so we're still figuring out who will be on what," Beckmann said. "It's exciting to see what these new orders will bring. Competing in a meet like this is a nice way to test them out against some really good teams."

Madison McClure had the top individual place for the Gazelles, finishing second in the 3200 (11:44.60). She also placed seventh in the 1600 (5:42.02).

Savannah Woods was sixth in both the 1600 (5:39.51) and 3200 (12:11.20).

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Yankton's Joseph Kelly takes off during the boys' pole vault at the Dan Lennon Invitational on Monday at the DakotaDome in Vermillion.

MLS To Make Announcement On Future In Minnesota

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Major League Soccer is expected to confirm during a news conference this week that an expansion franchise has been awarded to Minnesota.

MLS said Monday that Commissioner Don Garber will join Bill McGuire, the owner of the Minnesota United club in the North American Soccer League, for "an important announcement" Wednesday without specifying the nature of it. The news conference will be held at Target Field, the home of baseball's Minnesota Twins.

Minnesota United, which plays home games in the second-tier NASL in Blaine, a suburb north of Minneapolis, didn't respond to requests for further information about the announcement. Dan Courtmanche, the executive vice president of communications for MLS, declined to divulge details.

But one week ago, the league confirmed it's been in "advanced discussions" with McGuire and his partners about bringing a team to Minneapolis that would become the 23rd MLS franchise.

The statement from Garber issued then by the league expressed excitement about the McGuire group's plans for

a new soccer-specific stadium. McGuire is a former UnitedHealth Group executive.

Twins owner Jim Pohlad has joined Minnesota Timberwolves owner Glen Taylor as backers of McGuire's group. Speculation about a site for the new soccer venue has centered on the area near where the MLB and NBA teams play in the city's burgeoning North Loop neighborhood on the west edge of downtown.

There have been no publicized details of building or financing plans, though, and the appetite among state and local politicians for considering contributions is nonexistent. Gov. Mark Dayton said Monday that a public stadium subsidy for soccer would be a non-starter.

"I congratulate them on their apparent success of bringing a team to Minnesota, and I think if they are doing so they need to fully realize that it is something they are going to have to pay for out of their own private resources," Dayton said.

MLS has preferred smaller open-air venues, so Vikings owners were passed over in their pursuit of the expansion franchise for their massive, covered NFL stadium set to open in 2016.

NCAA Women: Stanford Advances To Sweet 16

STANFORD, Calif. (AP) — Amber Orrange scored 24 points and Lili Thompson added 19 as Stanford's backcourt mates took the game over in the second half to lead the fourth-seeded Cardinal to a victory over fifth-seeded Oklahoma.

Bonnie Samuelson scored 19 points and Briana Roberon provided a spark with 13 points and tough defense to help Stanford (26-9) protect its home court and advance to the Sweet 16 for the eighth consecutive season. The Cardinal will play top-seeded Notre Dame (33-2) in the third round on Friday in Oklahoma City.

Kaylon Williams scored 24 points and Goya Carter added 20 for the Sooners (21-12), who struggled to generate any consistent offense one game after scoring a season-high 111 points in a first-round win over Quinnipiac. Oklahoma knew this game would be more difficult, especially on Stanford's home court, and that proved correct once Thompson and Orange took over.

Spokane Regional

MARYLAND 85, PRINCETON 70: COLLEGE PARK, Md. (AP) — Laurin Mincy scored 27 points, and top-seeded Maryland used a second-half blitz to knock off previously unbeaten Princeton and advance to the Sweet 16 of the women's NCAA Tournament.



Stanford Cardinal's Erica McCall (24) dribbles against Oklahoma Sooners' Vionise Pierre-Louis (0) during the first half of their second-round NCAA Division I Women's Basketball Championship game on Monday in Stanford, Calif.

After leading by only 42-38 at the break, the Terrapins used a 17-2 run immediately after halftime to turn a surprisingly tight game into a rout.

The Terrapins (32-2) will bring a 26-game winning streak into a matchup with Duke on Saturday in Spokane, Washington. Maryland and Duke were longtime rivals in the Atlantic Coast Conference before the Terps moved to the Big Ten this season.

Lexie Brown scored 23 for the Terrapins, who will be making their fourth consecutive trip to the Sweet 16. Maryland reached the Final Four last year.

Eighth-seeded Princeton (31-1) was coming off the program's first-ever win in the NCAA Tournament, on Saturday against Wisconsin-Green Bay.

TENNESSEE 77, PITTSBURGH 67: KNOXVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Bashaara Graves scored 21 points and had 14 re-

bounds as Tennessee withstood a late rally to defeat Pittsburgh.

The second-seeded Lady Vols (29-5) improved to 56-0 in NCAA Tournament home games and advanced to a Spokane Region semifinal Saturday against No. 11 seed Gonzaga (26-7).

Tennessee is the only program to appear in all 34 NCAA Tournaments and has reached the regional semifinals every year but 2009, when it lost to Ball State in the opening round.

After trailing by 14 with 4 1/2 minutes left, Pittsburgh (20-12) cut the lead to 69-65 on Brianna Kiesel's three-point play with 37.8 seconds remaining. Ariel Masengale went 6 of 6 on free throws and made a steal in the final 37 seconds to seal Tennessee's victory.

Kiesel had a career-high 32 points for the 10th-seeded Panthers, who never led.

Greensboro Regional

FLORIDA STATE 65, FLORIDA GULF COAST 47: TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — Shakyla Thomas scored 12 points and Leticia Romero added 11 to help No. 2 Florida State end seventh-seeded Florida Gulf Coast's 26-game winning streak.

Taylor Gradijan's 12 points led Florida Gulf Coast, which shot just 31 percent overall and 25 percent from 3-point range. The 47 points was the fewest scored by the 20th-ranked Eagles this season.

Whitney Knight, FGCU's leading scorer and Atlantic Sun Player of the Year, missed nine of her 12 shots. She finished with nine points.

Florida State (31-4) led 36-28 lead at half. The Seminoles jumped off to a 17-2 lead, hitting their first three 3-point attempts that included a pair by Brittany Brown.

Florida Gulf Coast (31-3) managed to pull within 26-20 midway through the first half, but never got closer.

NORTH CAROLINA 86, OHIO STATE 84: CHAPEL HILL, N.C. (AP) — Jamie Cherry hit a jumper with 0.6 seconds left and North Carolina beat Ohio State.

Stephanie Mavunga had a career-high 27 points and 14 rebounds, Alisha Gray added 20 points and Brittany Rountree had 15 for the fourth-seeded Tar Heels (26-8).

They blew a 23-point lead before Cherry's latest big shot sent them into a Greensboro Regional semifinal matchup against top-seeded South Carolina (32-2) on Friday night.

Ameryst Alston had 30 points for the fifth-seeded Buckeyes (24-11), who never led but tied it twice in the final minute — the last coming when Kelsey Mitchell's free throws made it 84-all with 5.1 seconds left.

Gray rebounded to Cherry, who raced down the right sideline through the Ohio State pressure and pulled up for an 18-footer that swished through. The Buckeyes didn't get a shot off before the horn.