

# Athletic

From Page 1B

ments so he could do both," Miner said. "We suspected he might be special, and we were right."

Fischer started his freshman season as a distance specialist, but a chance substitution in a relay set him on the path towards being a sprinter.

"We were at a meet in Mitchell, and one of the legs of our four-by-four (1600 relay) got hurt," Fischer said. "They picked me out, and I ran a decent time."

"(Former Yankton assistant) Ray Kooistra got a hold of me then, and I was a sprinter."

From there, Fischer's running career took off. He was part of back-to-back state championship teams in 1992-93, helping the Bucks win all-class gold in the 800 relay as a junior. As a senior, the Bucks did not win the state team title, but Fischer won the 100, 200, 400 and helped the Bucks to victory in the 400 relay, winning all-class gold in all four events, a feat that had never been done in South Dakota boys' track. (It has since been done one other time, by Aberdeen Central's Tony Schwan in 2002.)

"He just kept getting stronger and faster as he went," Miner said. "We'd never had anyone develop speed like that in Yankton. At the end, nobody could touch him."

"It's nice to have someone that can get four firsts, no matter where you write him in at. There are not many that can do that."

Fischer's football career began with a similar moment of discovery. After not going out for football in seventh grade, middle school coach and PE teacher Lloyd Brunick convinced Fischer to join the team as an eighth grader.

"They started me off at punter and punt returner, then they took me to the backfield," Fischer noted. "Running back kind of stuck for me."

By the end of his sophomore season, head coach Max Hawk had called Fischer up to varsity. As a junior and senior, he was the Bucks' "Back of the Year," earning all-state honors in 1993.

"He kept getting bigger, stronger and faster, all football requisites," said Miner, an assistant coach on those teams. "We didn't know he'd be that special."

Fischer is quick to credit the strong team around him for helping push him to be his best.

"We had a bunch of guys that were always striving to better themselves," he said. "I remember one morning I tried to sleep in (instead of working out), and (YHS Hall of Famer) Lance Wipf came down to my room and dragged me out of bed."

"It made it easier to succeed individually and as a team in that environment."

Fischer also credited his coaches: Hawk, Miner and Kooistra.

"I remember Kooistra's thing was, 'Meat and potatoes before dessert,'" he said. "It meant you had to do the work before you reaped the rewards. That stuck with me."

Fischer's athletic ability took him to Augustana, where he continued to excel in both football and track. He was a four-year starter and four-year academic all-North Central Conference for the Vikings' football team. On the track, he was also a four-year academic all-conference honoree and ran on the Vikings' NCC-record 1600-meter relay (indoor). He was also part of the Vikings' Drake Relays champion sprint medley team in 1997.

Fischer graduated with honors from Augustana in 1999, and then did the same from the University of South Dakota School of Medicine in 2003. After a diagnostic radiology residency and a nuclear-molecular medicine fellowship at Indiana University in Indianapolis, Fischer returned to South Dakota with his wife Stephanie and their three children, Jackson (10), Gavin (8) and Griffin (4). They now live in Sioux Falls, where he is employed as a diagnostic radiologist and nuclear medicine physician at Sanford Clinic.

"I enjoy being back in South Dakota, in the area," he said.

Fischer is also an associate professor of radiology and course director for the radiology education program at the Sanford School of Medicine at the University of South Dakota, following in his parents' footsteps as an educator.

"My parents, David and Donna, played a huge role in helping me to develop the foundations of both my academic and athletic careers," he said. "Between the camps and traveling, their commitment to my career was absolutely critical."

Now 17 years removed from his YHS career, Fischer still believes the groundwork for his success was laid in Yankton.

"The people, both the students and educators, really stuck with me," he said. "The teachers that showed interest in me, the support I had on and off the field, helped propel me to where I am today."

## Jaime Kulbel

WHEN THE LINEAGE OF Yankton High School girls' distance running success is mapped out, much of it can be traced back to Jaime Kulbel.

Kulbel was the first state cross country champion in Yankton girls' history and helped lead the Gazelles to the 1995 state track title — the only state title won by an East River school since 1989. Along the way, she helped inspire the next generation of Gazelle runners, who helped set the table for Yankton's success the following decade.

Kulbel started off as "such a tiny freshman," according to then-assistant track and cross-country coach Dan Fitzsimmons, now the head cross country coach at the University of South Dakota. "She told me she hated running on windy days, but she hung in there. We always knew there was talent there."

For Kulbel, running came naturally.

"I was a runner before I was officially a runner," she said. "Running was in me before I even realized it."

It didn't take long for her to make an impact, earning the first of her four medals at the state cross-country meet her freshman year.

"As we moved her up in distance, things got easier and easier for her," Fitzsimmons said. "She had some speed and a really long stride. Put

that at the end of the race, and all of a sudden you've got a great finish."

Part of what helped Kulbel continue to grow as a runner was the relaxed team atmosphere, she noted.

"Fitz made it fun," she said. "We had a coed team, so we had a variety of people there, and it was a social experience as well as exercise."

Besides running well on her own, Kulbel also proved a valuable relay member.

"Some of my fondest memories of her were when she would anchor relays," Fitzsimmons said. "When we won the state title, she took the baton in the medley in last place and ended up winning, and that clinched the state title for us."

In 1995, the senior-laden Gazelles came into the state track meet believing they were title contenders but had been written off by some in the media.

"Going into the state track meet, the (Sioux Falls Argus Leader) had an

article saying that track was the province of younger girls," Miner said. "We had six seniors on that team. That provided a little extra motivation."

Kulbel won the 1,600 and 3,200, and also anchored the medley relay win, and was named the meet's Outstanding Performer. Later that spring, she was the USA Track and Field national runner-up in the 1,500 and 3,000 in the national junior meet.

As Kulbel's prep career started to wind down, she made a connection that took her to the next level.

"Running was just something I did. I hadn't looked at the future," she said. "(Yankton native and Notre Dame grad) Matt Althoff was a year ahead of me in school, and I got to go to one of his races. I saw the Wisconsin team, and they struck me compared to every other team."

After that, things came together quickly and Kulbel ended up a Badger.

"I was a fan of the Wisconsin women's coach at the time, and I got coerced into going over and introducing myself," Fitzsimmons said. "Forty-eight hours later, we had a little exchange of video and Jaime was making plans to tour the campus."

"If Matt had not been at Notre Dame, I don't know if that would have gotten done."

Kulbel competed in two Big Ten Championships and one NCAA meet for Wisconsin, and earned two seventh place finishes in Big Ten track competition. But she kept in contact with her Gazelle roots.

"Jaime would come back when she had the chance," Fitzsimmons noted. "She wrote a lot of notes to congratulate or encourage some of the younger girls."

Kulbel graduated from Wisconsin in 2000, and continued to be active, as a competitor in triathlons and duathlons, and as a coach.

She has competed three times for Team USA in triathlons, in 2005, 2006 and 2008, and in three World Duathlon events: 2008-10. In the 2008 World Duathlon in Italy, she was the fourth American across the finish line.

"For me, it was really fun to do those races," she said. "It was a great way to see the world."

While her competitive spirit has remained intact, her approach to competition has changed.

"I've matured over the years as far as how I approach races," she said. "Back then, I tied my success to winning. If I won, I'm more successful."

"Now, it's about giving whatever I have for each race. It's about doing the best you can, and only you can know that."

Kulbel also spent time as a coach, serving as the head girls' track coach at Madison (Wis.) East High School in 2004-05, and as the school's assistant

cross country coach from 2003-08.

"The one thing I discovered is that coaching is much more difficult. I gained a lot of respect for what (Fitzsimmons) has done for us," she said. "Some of these girls weren't as excited about running as I am, so you have to kind of distract them. You have to try to figure out what makes each individual tick. It is a struggle."

Kulbel tried to give those girls what she gained as a runner for the Gazelles.

"I wanted the girls I was coaching to develop a healthy love of running," she said. "Our goal was to develop runners but, more importantly, well-rounded young women. It's easier said than done."

Kulbel left the coaching ranks to go back to the University of Wisconsin, where she is working on a nursing degree and will graduate next May.

# ENDS MONDAY!

# MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR

# SPRING SELL-OFF & CLEARANCE EVENT

# SAVE UP TO 60% OFF STOREWIDE!\*

ALL ITEMS SUBJECT TO PRIOR SALE. 1ST COME...1ST SOLD

**SAVE \$202!**



SOFA

REG. \$499, NOW ONLY

\$297

**SAVE \$350!**



DOUBLE RECLINING SOFA  
REG. \$949, NOW ONLY

\$599

**SAVE \$840!**



REG. \$1399, NOW ONLY

\$559

42" X 66" TABLE & 4 SIDE CHAIRS  
(extends to 42" x 96")

**SAVE \$380!**



REG. \$979, NOW ONLY

\$599

42" X 60" TABLE & 4 SWIVEL CHAIRS

**SAVE \$380!**



REG. \$1079, NOW ONLY

\$699

6PC QUEEN BEDROOM

Includes: queen headboard, footboard, rails, dresser, mirror & nightstand

**SAVE \$202!**



REG. \$479, NOW ONLY

\$277

SOFA

**SAVE \$300!**



REG. \$999, NOW ONLY

\$699

DOUBLE RECLINING SOFA WITH DROP-DOWN TABLE AND MASSAGE

**SAVE \$470!**



REG. \$1269, NOW ONLY

\$799

3PC SECTIONAL

(available in cafe or cocoa)

**SAVE \$900!**



REG. \$2199, NOW ONLY

\$1299

2PC ITALIAN LEATHER SECTIONAL

NATUZZI EDITIONS

# UNCLAIMED FREIGHT FURNITURE

A Division Of Furniture Outlets USA

The #1 Furniture Retailer in the Area!

\*Items are priced as marked, with discounts taken off of regular marked prices. Financing may be available, subject to credit approval and minimum purchase requirements. Some exclusions may apply. See store for details. Does not apply to previous purchases or Hot Buys. Clearance items are available only while quantities last. Prices valid for a limited time only. An amount equal but not limited to sales tax and delivery charges must be paid at the time of purchase. All items may not be exactly as shown in this advertisement and may not be on display in all showrooms. Style and selection may vary. Although every precaution is taken, some errors may occur in print. We reserve the right to correct any such errors. Expires 5/9/2011.

Find us on Facebook

Sioux Falls • 6600 West 12th St. • 334.9027

Mitchell • 1500 North Main • 996.9820

Yankton • 2320 Broadway • 665.3446

Watertown • 17 West Kemp • 886.5883

Pierre • 540 South Garfield • 224.7200

Sioux City • 2500 Transit Ave. • 274.5926

Fargo • 2520 South University Dr. • 237.3360

Aberdeen • 3315 6th Ave. SE • 225.0812

unclaimedfreightfurniture.com