

# Hammon To Play For Russia Again In London Olympics

BY DOUG FEINBERG  
AP Basketball Writer

UNCASVILLE, Conn. (AP) — Becky Hammon hopes that the Olympics will be a little less stressful for her.

Hammon will once again play for the Russian women's basketball team at the games this summer in London. She created a stir in 2008 when she first played for Russia in the Beijing Olympics. She helped guide that team to a bronze medal.

"It's old news," Hammon said about her decision to play for Russia. "I played with them in the world championship, European championship, hopefully I'll

enjoy it a lot more. By far it was one of the best decisions I ever made and I stand by that, and really look forward to doing it again."

When Hammon, who was raised in South Dakota and played to Colorado State, initially decided to play for Russia in 2008 it ignited a media firestorm with people questioning her patriotism, including 2008 U.S. Olympic coach Anne Donovan.

Every time Hammon went on the road with the San Antonio Silver Stars she had reporters waiting to talk to her about her decision to play for Russia.

It got to be a bit much. "I had reporters from all over

the north asking me questions," Hammon said. "Everywhere I went that's all anyone wanted to talk about. It's nice that this time people seem to be focused on other things. It seems almost every team now has one or two players with foreign passports playing for them. It goes back to the whole 'it's Russia'. If it was a country no one heard of, no one really would have cared. That's the society we live in."

Now no one seems to notice anymore.

"It's played through once," Silver Stars coach Dan Hughes said. "The reality of it is we've been through it one time already and Becky is an example of what I

think a lot of teams that the U.S. will face. There are a lot of players in our league that are now on other teams and going to be part of the Olympic experience."

The 35-year-old point guard plays for a Russian club team during the winter and became a naturalized citizen. Because she hadn't played for the United States in any major FIBA-sanctioned international events, she was allowed to compete for Russia in the Beijing Olympics.

While Hammon is happy that the firestorm seems to have died down this time around, she also is proud that her Russian has im-

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## Class A

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ald also had a good day, placing eighth in the triple jump (40-10) and not only helping the 800 relay advance, but the 400 (45.00) and 1600 (3:33.54) relays as well. Kodi Larson and Nathan Bares were also part of both relays, with Brendan Bares completing the 400 relay squad and Scott Van Winkle helping out the 1600 relay.

The Vermillion boys advanced two relays to finals, the 1600 (3:27.94) and medley (3:40.51) relays. The Tanager medley squad is ranked first, with the 1600 relay squad ranked second.

Dakota Valley's Colton Mahler advanced to the finals in the 400, clocking a 51.55 to be seeded eighth in today's final.

Third place finishes from Vermillion's Mackenzie Huber and Platte-Geddes' Mackenzie Huber and Platte-Geddes' Mackenzie Huber highlighted the efforts among area girls.

Huber placed in the pole vault with a mark of 9-3. Girton, the 2011 champion in the high jump, cleared 5-1 to place third in that event, with Wagner's LaShawn Medicine Horn placing fifth, also at 5-1.

Beresford senior Alison Klostergaard placed fifth in the triple jump with a mark of 34-3 3/4. Bon Homme's Caitlin McLouth (32-8) finished eighth in that event.

Beresford's Ashley Ostrem used a toss of 117 feet to place seventh in the discus. Vermillion's Elizabeth Szymonski finished eighth with a toss of 115-4.

Platte-Geddes' Brianna Erickson, Aubrey Rabenberg, Reganne Engebretson and Shelby Rabenberg earned a fifth place finish in the 3200 relay with a clocking of 9:58.11.

Klostergaard also earned a spot in the 100 hurdles finals, clocking a 16.11 to rank eighth. Vermillion's Val Moos advanced in the 300 hurdles, placing eighth in the prelims with a 48.41.

Elk Point-Jefferson (4:30.93) and Vermillion (4:32.13) each earned a spot in the medley relay finals, EPJ seeded sixth and the Tanagers seeded eighth.

Action continues in Rapid City today, with all three classes converging on one site.



Yankton's Connor Fitzsimmons readies to jump during the boys' long jump Friday at the first day of the S.D. State Class Track & Field Championships in Sturgis. Fitzsimmons finished fourth in the event.

## Class AA

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grader was simply trying to crack the top-8 in the 3200-meter run.

Seeded seventh coming in, Woods instead ran an aggressive race and finished fourth with a time of 11:27.33.

"Considering that was like the fourth time I've ever ran that one, I'm really excited about it," Woods said. "It felt good lead to lead the pack there for a while."

Junior Kelsey Fitzgerald competed in two of her three jumping events on Friday, and walked away with a 12th place finish in both the long jump (15-5) and triple jump (32-6.5).

"I didn't do horrible, but I guess I'm still a little disappointed," she said. "You can always do better."

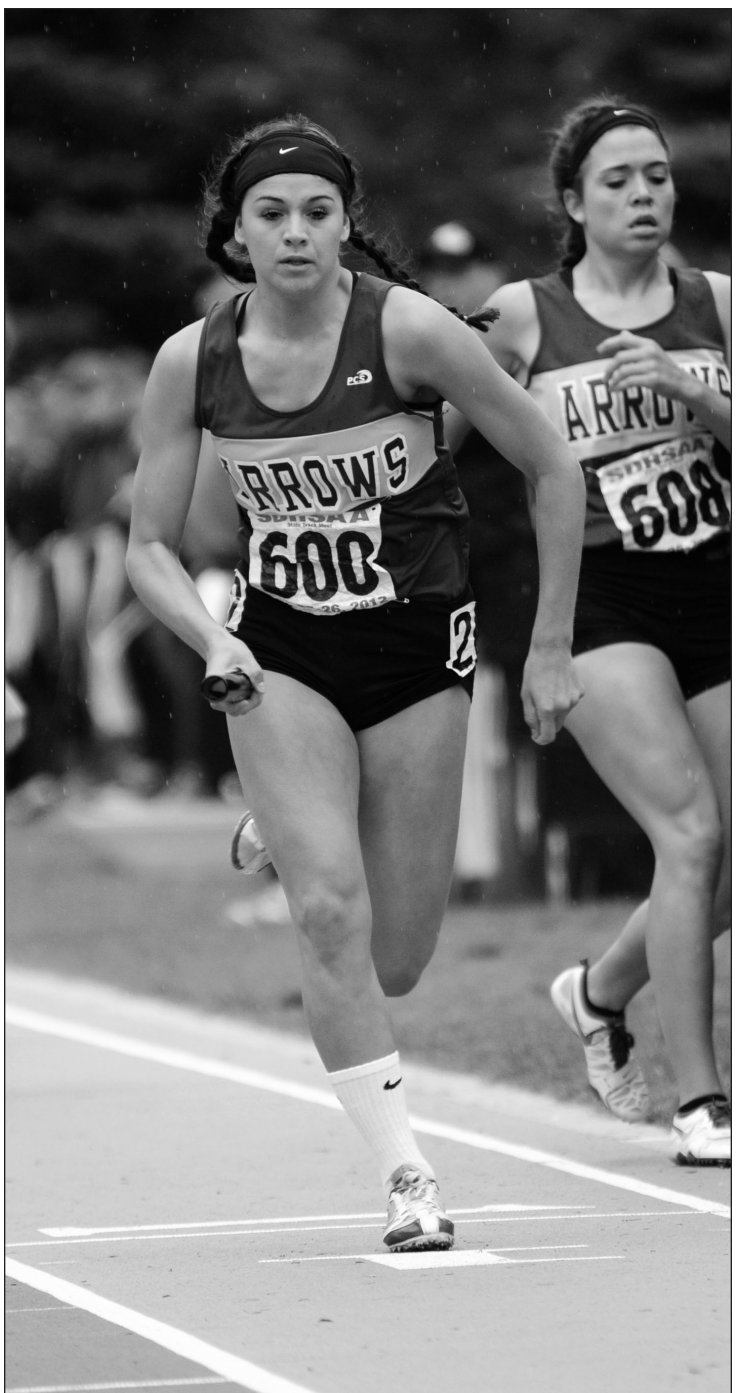
Fitzgerald will shoot for a state title in the high jump today (Saturday), an event she ranks second — one inch behind the leader.

The Bucks and Gazelles each advanced their 400 and 800 relay groups to today's finals, a feat Youmans was especially impressed with.

"We haven't gotten through to the finals for a few years now in those, so it'll be fun for those kids to have one more shot," he said.

All three classes will come together for today's final day of the state meet at O'Hara Stadium in Rapid City, starting at 9 a.m. (Mountain).

You can follow Jeremy Hoeck on Twitter at [twitter.com/jhoeck](http://twitter.com/jhoeck)



Watertown's Tia Hemiller takes the baton during the girls' 3200-meter relay on Friday in Sturgis. The University of South Dakota basketball recruit said she is optimistic that the program will make the right decision after former head coach Ryun Williams left for Colorado State.

## USD Hoops Recruit Hemiller Optimistic About Future

BY JEREMY HOECK

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STURGIS — Even though she was focused on the state track meet at hand, Tia Hemiller said basketball is never far from her mind.

The Watertown senior and University of South Dakota basketball recruit said she was surprised that former USD coach Ryun Williams left for Colorado State.

But when it comes to the future, Hemiller said she is optimistic.

"I knew Ryun was a good coach and had been having a lot of success, but I was a little surprised, yeah," said Hemiller, who competed in three events at the opening day of the Class AA meet in Sturgis.

"But it wasn't something totally out of the blue, especially when you win so many games like he did."

A 2-time first team All-State selection, Hemiller averaged 18.1 points, 7 rebounds, 3 assists and 2 steals as a senior for the Arrows.

She was one of four South Dakota players to sign with the Coyote women's program last fall, joining Margaret McCloud (Rapid City Stevens) and Heidi Hoff (Brandon Valley), as well as walk-on Bailey Milne (Madison).

For Hemiller, the news of Williams' exit last weekend hit closer to home.

The person to first relay the news was USD assistant Mandy Koupal, who was an assistant at Watertown before coming to Vermillion. Koupal left with Williams to become director of basketball operations at Colorado State.

"That was hard. She was my coach when I was an eighth-grader," Hemiller said. "I know that was probably one of the hardest things she's had to do, leaving like that."

Now, with Williams gone and Ryan Larsen in place as the interim coach at USD, the focus turns to the future, Hemiller said.

"I know everything happens for a reason, but you can't keep dreading on the past," she said. "You have to get ready for what's next."

"We have great teammates, and I know whoever comes in will do a good job."

On that subject, no, Hemiller has no inside information as to whom USD and athletic director David Saylor will hire. But she did say she would prefer a coach that is both "demanding" and "sincere."

"I like coaches who get after you, but even those who want to know you on a personal level," Hemiller said. "Coach Williams seemed like that was exactly the kind of coach he was."

Hemiller will join a Coyote program that will return two starters and benefit from Nicole Seekamp becoming eligible in 2012-13. As USD becomes fully eligible for the Summit League and NCAA tournaments, Hemiller said she is anxious to help the program.

"I can't wait for all those rivalries," she said. "You always hear about those games and everything that goes into it, so I'm just really excited to get to see that up close as a player."

You can follow Jeremy Hoeck on Twitter at [twitter.com/jhoeck](http://twitter.com/jhoeck)

## Class B

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Gerdes found some last-minute advice to calm his nerves before jumping which helped him shake some nerves. "I always think about it too much and as I walked to the runway my Mom said just have fun with it," Gerdes said.

Gerdes competes in the long jump as well as the medley relay finals today. He had a number of teammates also move on to finals after the preliminaries. Junior Trevor Jacobsen (100 & 200 dash), Senior Dennis DeNeui (100 dash), as well as the 400, 800, and medley relay teams of V-H compete today after advancing.

Numerous other local athletes also placed on the podium in Friday's final events.

Gayville-Volin's John Guy (fourth in the shot put), Andes Central's Connor Florey (fourth in the triple jump), Alcester-Hudson's Ty Schoellerman (sixth in the 800), and Scotland's Dan Stibral (seventh in the discus) all placed in the top-eight and scored points for their teams.

After day one on the girls' side, Ipswich scored a 39-25 scoring edge over Arlington.

Irene-Wakonda's Haley Hinseth scored a pair of top-five finishes, with a fourth-place effort in the shot put and a fifth-place finish in the discus.

Hinseth's teammate Pearl Gaidelis, a senior, finished seventh in the pole vault while the Eagles' Lexy Schenck placed eighth in the triple jump.

Freshman Sokolowski also had an outstanding day for the Eagles. She ran a 15.03 to post the top time in the 100 hurdle.

dles heading into today's final and also ran on the 400 and 800 relays teams that qualified for finals.

Parker also qualified their 400 and 800 relays teams for finals along with their 1600 relay team. Pheasant Anna Leloux was third in the discus.

Freeman freshman Cailey Roth finished fourth in the 800 final and also advanced to today's 400 final along with anchoring the Flyer 1600 relay team that qualified for finals. Roth's teammate Rebecca Eberts scored for the Flyers with a fifth-place finish in the 3200.

Eberts, an eighth-grader, improved eight places from 13th last year in the eight-lap race.

"I was hoping to get on the podium," Eberts said. "It was a great race, the weather was perfect, and I'm just proud to be here."

Another local athlete placing the 3200 was Gayville-Volin eighth-grader Genevieve Clark (third place). Gayville-Volin's 3200 relay team also scored with a sixth-place finish.

Two area girls placed in the high jump. Viborg-Hurley's Haley Jorgensen was fourth while Andes Central's Kellie Winckler was sixth.

Rounding out the standout performances for area girls was Alcester-Hudson junior Jessica Wegch's trier. Wegch used a trio of solid performances to advance to today's finals in the 100, 200, and 400.

Action in all three classes kicks off in Rapid City today (Saturday) at 9 a.m.

You can follow Chris Riley on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/chrisriley](http://www.twitter.com/chrisriley)

## College

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"It feels pretty good," Grove said. "I tried to do what I usually do. It was really exciting; Bethany made it on her first try and it set the mood for the rest of the event."

Senior Jasmine Mosley fired a throw of 149-2 in the women's discus to place 36th. The senior capped off an impressive Coyote career with back-to-back trips to the NCAA West Preliminaries.

Prior to setting her 400-meter hurdles record, Duling ran a time of 13.83 in the 100-meter hurdle prelims to take 38th. Sophomore

Jeff Mettler ran a time of 9:30.83 in the 3,000-meter steeplechase and placed 43rd.

Three Coyotes will compete on Saturday — sophomore Cody Snyder (men's discus), junior Kyle Ballew (men's pole vault) and senior Kenna Wolter (women's triple jump).

### NAIA Meet

MARION, Ind. — A pair of Mount Marty College athletes just missed All-American honors during day two of competition in the NAIA Outdoor Track and Field Championships, being held at the Indiana Wesleyan University Outdoor Track Complex in Marion, Ind.

In the women's triple jump,

Lancer freshman Abbey VanDenBerg placed 10th with a jump of 37-5 1/4. She finished just 5 1/4 inches off of the eighth place mark.

MMC senior Trevor Lopour finished just two inches off a top-eight finish in the men's high jump, clearing 6-6 to finish in a tie for 13th. Places 5-8 each cleared 6-8.

Hartington, Neb., native Jonathan Becker, a sophomore for Concordia, missed the finals in the men's 400-meter hurdles, placing 16th in the semifinals with a clocking of 54.65. He came in seeded 18th.

The meet concludes today (Saturday) in Marion, Ind. No Lancer athletes are qualified for events scheduled for today.

## Nelson

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Nelson will be on the roster along side players from Arkansas, Nebraska, Hawaii and Florida State, as well as smaller colleges like Oral Roberts, St. Cloud State and Indian Hills Community College.

"I'm looking forward to competing with (NCAA) Division I players, getting to know some new faces," Nelson said. "I'm looking forward to playing with some people who play in some big-time programs."

Bernatow is hoping to see Nel-

son learn from the opportunity and make himself — and his teammates — better next season.

"I'm hoping it's a quality experience for him," Bernatow said. "I'd like to see him grow as a ball player and a leader. This is a great situation for him."

While Nelson will miss out on coaching the Yankton Lakers VFW Teener team, a group that won the State 13-14 Minors VFW Teener title with the Reds last year, and working with his friends as part of the Riverside

Field grounds crew, it was an opportunity he couldn't pass up.

"When someone offers you an opportunity to play in one of the top leagues in the nation, to get your name out there, you can't turn it down," Nelson said.

Nelson reports to the Huskies on Monday. The 2012 season begins on Wednesday.

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