

MMC's Fernandez Named GPAC Co-Coach Of The Year



Mount Marty softball coach Albert Fernandez, right, talks to a player during a home game this past season. Fernandez, who was diagnosed with Stage 4 lung cancer last fall, was named the Great Plains Athletic Conference co-coach of the year. It is the second time in three seasons that Fernandez has earned that honor.

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK
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It is not often that the coach of a 6-22 team shares in a league's Coach of the Year honors. Then again, not too many coaches have had a season like Mount Marty softball coach Albert Fernandez.

Fernandez, who was diagnosed with Stage 4 lung cancer last fall and underwent months of treatments before the season, was recognized by his peers as the Great Plains Athletic Conference's co-coach of the year, sharing the honor with Troy Baker of league champion Hastings.

"It's an amazing testament to the strength of what Albert did," said GPAC commissioner Corey Westra. "This goes beyond wins and losses. It's about human strength."

Fernandez had the respect of his GPAC peers prior to the season, having earned league Coach of the Year honors in 2011.

"Albert has always been widely respected," Westra said. "He does it the right way."

When he was first diagnosed, Fernandez had said that he fully intended to be back in time for the opening practices of the season. Despite being weakened by both the cancer and its treatment, he missed just one doubleheader the entire season.

"It's very important to the healing process," said Westra, who said that his father had also been treated for cancer. "When

you can put something in front of you and you can reach it, it helps you, helps your cause."

He had also hoped to keep the focus on the field, as senior catcher Gabi Cardenas discovered when she and assistant coach Amanda Volgarin, a former player for Fernandez, went to visit him in the hospital.

"It was hard because we didn't know what was going on. I was scared," she said. "Amanda and I went to visit him the day he got out of surgery, and he said, 'Aren't you supposed to be at practice?'"

"He tried to avoid dwelling on it. He was there for us. He didn't like us to cater to him. He wanted us to keep working."

The team started slowly — a combination of its youth and a sporadic schedule caused by this spring's weather — but finished with a flourish. MMC played 10 games — five doubleheaders — on the final six days of the season, winning five of them, including one over GPAC runner-up Morningside, which made the NAIA Opening Round. MMC also won league games over GPAC tourney teams Nebraska Wesleyan and Briar Cliff, then ended the season with a sweep of tourney qualifier Dakota Wesleyan.

It was MMC's first conference sweep in two years, and MMC will open the 2014 season riding a three-game win streak.

"I was so proud of them for how they finished," Fernandez said. "It shows there is a lot of potential on this team."

MMC athletic director Chuck Iverson felt that Fernandez and the team handled the season admirably.

"Talk about a tough year. He's working through his issues, and then it was just a tough spring for softball and baseball," he said. "I was so impressed with how the team finished the season out. I'm so proud of the effort that he and the team showed."

Freshman pitcher Jessica Finch helped the team get past some of the "little things" that can distract a squad.

"I think it pushed us a lot," she said. "If somebody was whining about some little thing, we only had to look at Coach to put things in perspective."

Junior outfielder Jamie Gregory said the experiences of this season will stay with the team for a long time.

"Now that we've been through this, next year will be 10 times better," she said. "We're going to be more successful, and we'll have a chance to go to the conference tournament."

Three Lancers Named HM All-GPAC

Cardenas, Gregory and Finch were all named honorable mention All-GPAC by the league on Tuesday.

Cardenas, the lone senior on the Lancer roster this season, batted a team-best .303 and led the team with a .418 on-base percent-

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Track & Field | District C-6

Weather Doesn't Phase Crofton

Warriors Sweep Rain-Soaked District Meet

BY JEREMY HOECK
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HARTINGTON, Neb. — Even with meet officials brushing water off the track mere seconds before certain races started, the Crofton girls didn't let it phase them.

No, as every other area athlete has all spring, the Lady Warriors took care of business as usual despite rain and cold temperatures.

With one event moved to today (Friday), the Crofton girls recorded 118 total points to lead the way at the District C-6 track meet on Thursday in Hartington, Neb. The Crofton boys also sit in first place, with a 4-point edge over Creighton.

"It's more of a mindset thing," said senior Dani Riesberg, who was first in the 200-meter dash (26.5) and 400 (1:01.4) on a wet track. "You can't let it affect you too much."

"The toughest thing is the wind on the backstretch," she added. "Eventually you'll get past it and cruise to the finish."

That was all the Warriors could do, not stress about the weather.

Crofton posted the top time or mark in nine events Thursday, with three athletes winning two events. For good measure, the Warriors were the champions in the 1600 and 3200 relays.

Sophomore Maria Wortmann didn't have to worry so much about a wet surface, as wet discs and shots.

"It's kind of hard in discus, because it slips out of your hand," said Wortmann, who won the discus (103-feet) and shot put (39-9).

"We've all dealt with this stuff all spring," she added. "Runners can run inside, but throwers, you kind of have to be outside."

When it came to those runners on the track, Crofton found success in mid-distance and distance races. Sophomore Quinn Wragge won the 800-meter run (2:24.4), while sophomore Allison Arens was first in the 1600 (5:49.3) and 3200 (12:15.5).

The combination of rainy meets and practice routines paid off for the Warriors, Arens said.

"Our coaches make us practice all the time, even in weather like this, so we're definitely prepared," she said.

In both of her races, Arens was neck-and-neck with an opposing runner before distancing herself on the final lap.

"It's nice to know you can do it, even though they're tough races," she said. "There are a lot of good runners here, and they really pushed me."

Crofton has been pushed in the team race, as Hartington Cedar Catholic sits second at 112.5 points.

The Trojans had the top time or mark in five events in the girls' division, led by double winner Alli Walter in the 100 (12.8) and 200 (26.9). Katelyn Dicks won the 300 hurdles (49.8), Emily Schremp won the long jump (16-4.25) and Lexi Steffen was first in the triple jump (34-6.5).

On the boys' side, Crofton won three events to finish first with 98 total points, just ahead of Creighton at 94.

It wasn't just the girls fighting



Crofton's Dani Riesberg, right, sprints to the finish line of the girls' 400-meter dash at Thursday's District C-6 track meet in Hartington, Neb. Riesberg won the 200 and 400 on the day.

Roth Powers Freeman To Cornbelt Sweep

MENNO — Cailey Roth had a busy day but successful day on the track as she led the Freeman girls to a team track title at Thursday's Cornbelt Conference meet in Menno.

Freeman made it a clean sweep for the Flyers with a 4-point victory in the boys' team race.

Roth had the top time in four distance races, as she won the 400 (1:01.27), 800 (2:31.25), 1600 (5:32.79) and 3200 (12:51.95).

Also for the Flyers, who were first overall with 199.5 total points, Melissa Eberts was first in the triple jump (30-0.25) and Nicole Saarie won the high jump (4-7).

Menno's Christina Herrboldt was the pole vault champion at 7-feet-9.

The Flyers were victorious in 10 events on the boys' side, finishing first with 208 total team points — thanks to a pair of 3-event champions.

Shawn Becker won the 100-meter dash (11.6), high jump (5-6) and long jump (20-4.75). Grant Preheim won the 110 hurdles

(17.79), 300 hurdles (46.0) and triple jump (38-9.5).

Also for the Flyers, Brennan Schmidt won the 200 (23.07) and 400 (51.13), while Andrew Munkvold won the pole vault (10-9) and Joseph Weier was first in the discus (128-6).

Marion's Andrew Nelson was the champion in the shot put (43-8.5), while the Bears won the 800 relay.

Big 8 Conference

HARRISBURG — The Madison Bulldogs combined for 12 event victories to sweep the team track titles at the final Big 8 Conference meet on Thursday in Harrisburg.

Harrisburg joins the Eastern South Dakota Conference this fall, and the other schools are merging with the Big Sioux Conference to form the Dakota X11 Conference.

Madison won nine titles in the boys' division to claim first place with 154 total points, well in front of Harrisburg (71). Vermillion was fourth at 45.

Harrisburg's Trevor DeSchepper set a new meet record in the 100-meter dash (10.43), while Lennox's Zach Koosman tied the meet record in the high jump (6-6).

The Tanagers won three events. Colin Olson was first in the

400-meter dash (52.13), Austin Krier won the 800 (2:02.51) and Vermillion was first in the 1600 relay.

Madison also dominated the girls' division, with 117 total points for first place. Harrisburg was second at 101 and Vermillion took fifth at 24.

Harrisburg's Cailyn Schreurs set a new meet record in the 300 hurdles (46.27) and the Tigers' 3200 relay squad broke the meet record (9:55.68).

Mackenzie Huber was the only champion for the Tanagers as she won the pole vault at 8-feet-6.

Neb. District C-7

ATKINSON, Neb. — Ainsworth swept the team titles at the Nebraska District C-7 track meet on Thursday in Atkinson, Neb.

On the girls' side, Ainsworth scored 173.83 total points, followed by Chambers-Wheeler Central at 121.17. Niobrara-Verdige scored a total of 24 points.

Ainsworth had three double winners, as Alyssa Kinning was first in the 1600-meter run (5:42.0) and 3200 (12:23.4). Schylar Philben was also the champion in the 100 hurdles (15.6) and 300 hurdles (49.0), while Shandon Platt won the discus (128-0) and shot put (41-7.5).

On the boys' side, Ainsworth was first with 161 total points. Niobrara-Verdige had 10 points.

Landon Welke of Ainsworth finished first in the long jump (19-9), pole vault (14-4) and triple jump (40-9.75).

Dennis Breaks Javelin Records In Win At Summit League Championships

MUNCIE, Ind. — Freshman Meghan Dennis broke the USD, the state and the Summit League records in the women's javelin as the Coyote women rank first and the men fifth after day one of the Summit League Outdoor Track and Field Championships on Thursday.

The USD women scored 54.5 points and lead defending champion North Dakota State by eight. NDSU leads the men's competition with 55 points, while USD has 10.

Dennis' mark of 157 feet, 10 inches broke the USD record of

152-3 set by Heather Andrews in 1991, the college state record of 156-9 set by Jen Buyske of Augustana in 2005 and the league record of 153-1 set last season by Camila Pirelli of Oral Roberts. Dennis won by five feet over Kansas City's Kimoya Hariott at 152-9.

The USD women scored 24.5 points in the pole vault as Bethany Buell's second-place finish led a group of four Coyotes to top-five finishes in the event. Buell cleared 13-5 1/4 while Emily Grove placed third at the same height. Madison Mills was fourth

at 13-1 1/2 and Hunter Wilkes was fifth at 12-1 1/2.

Megan Hilson placed second in the women's 10,000-meters in 36 minutes, 32.80 seconds, while Amber Eichkorn was third in 36:33.28. For the men, Mubarik Musa placed fifth in the 10,000 in 30:41.95 and Denton Stephens finished fifth in the hammer throw at 179-5 to round out USD's top-five finishers on day one.

In multi-events, Tansha Clarke will enter the second day of the heptathlon in second with 3,047 points, trailing Omaha's Sami Spenner with 3,356. Clarke

posted the best shot put mark in the competition on Thursday at 39-10.

In the men's decathlon, Josh Petersen had the best marks in the 100-meters (11.27) and the shot put (39-7) to finish day one in third place with 3,492 points. Zach Glasebrook of Western Illinois leads the event with 3,601 points.

Day two of the meet will begin at 10 a.m. Friday with the final events of the heptathlon and decathlon.

Golf: Parkston Rolls To Title At Harrisburg

HARRISBURG — The Parkston Trojans had four golfers shoot 80 or better on the way to a 32-stroke victory over Sioux Falls Christian in the Harrisburg Invitational Girls' Golf Tournament, held on Thursday at Spring Creek Golf Course in Harrisburg.

Parkston's Sydney and Jordan Bormann shot 72 and 74 to finish 1-2 in the individual standings, helping the Trojans to a team score of 305. The Chargers, led by Mikaela Theobald's 76 and Abby Perrenoud's 78, finished at 337. Harrisburg and Dakota Valley each shot 358 to place third in the team rankings.

TEAM SCORES: Parkston 305, Sioux Falls Christian 337, Harrisburg 358, Dakota Valley 358, Vermillion 365, Madison 376, West Central 394, Canton 395, Beresford 409, Harrisburg JV 432, Dell Rapids 439, Lennox 459

TOP 15: Sydney Bormann, Parkston 72; Jordan Bormann, Parkston 74; Mikaela Theobald, S.F. Christian 76; Abby Perrenoud, S.F. Christian 78; Logan Wagner, Parkston 78; Sydney Weber, Parkston 80; Allison Heine, Vermillion 83; Shylar Funck, Dakota Valley 85; Mary High, Dakota Valley 85; Taylor Steen, Harrisburg 88; Kiersten Warkenthein, S.F. Christian 88; Megan Parsons, Harrisburg 88; Sadie Swier, West Central 88; Morgan Danner, Harrisburg 90; Lindsey Sorlie, Canton 90; Hannah North, Elk Point-Jefferson 90

NENAC Boys

NELIGH, Neb. — Laurel-Concord-Coleridge edged Plainview by one stroke to win the final Northeast Nebraska Activities Conference boys' golf tournament, held on Tuesday in Neligh, Neb.

The league is disbanding after this school year, with several members going to the Lewis & Clark Conference and Niobrara Valley Conference.

LCC shot 323, putting all four of its golfers in the top eight. Plainview was led by medalist Sam Meuret's 69, which was four strokes ahead of LCC's Mitchell Klooz.

TEAM SCORES: Laurel-Concord-Coleridge 323, Plainview 324, West Holt 360, Creighton 377, Neligh-Oakdale 380, Randolph 401

TOP 10: Sam Meuret, Plainview 69, Mitchell Klooz, LCC 73; Corby Forbes, Plainview 79; Jami McCoy, LCC 81; Nate Gramquist, LCC 84; Colin Wright, Plainview 84; Austyn Ramm-Lech, West Holt 85; Nathan Schmitt, LCC 85; Tanner Homan, Creighton 86; Cameron Schmeucker, West Holt 88

Coyotes Fall In Summit Opener

FARGO, N.D. — Fort Wayne catcher Dani Pugh's three-run home run in the bottom of the fifth inning broke a 1-1 tie and proved to be the difference as IPFW went on to win 5-2 in the opening round of the Summit League Championships at Ellig Sports Complex on Thursday night.

The Coyotes (29-19, 12-7 SL) will face Kansas City at 3 p.m. today (Friday) in an elimination game.

Erica Denney (17-8) went the distance on the mound for USD, allowing four earned runs on 11 hits and striking out three. Kate Snow was 2 for 3 at the plate with two RBIs, while Lindsey Boyd was 2 for 4 with a stolen base and Matley Jones hit her eighth double of the season.

IPFW pitcher Miranda Kramer (22-7) set a new Summit League Championships record with 15 strikeouts in the complete game effort. She also allowed six hits and walked one 'Yote.

South Dakota plated one run in the top of the second inning to open the scoring. Morgan Hancock led off with a walk, advanced to third on Christine Broders' bunt single and scored on a single by Snow.

Fort Wayne (32-13, 12-4 SL) tied the game in the bottom of the third inning. With no outs and Larissa Franklin on second base Ashleigh Bou doubled down the left field line, scoring her teammate.

Two innings later Pugh's three-run shot gave her team the lead for good. Fort Wayne added one more run in the stanza, pushing its lead to 5-1.

The Coyotes' managed one run in their final opportunity at the plate. Kate Snow's single through the middle of the infield scored Katelyn Wudel, who came on to pinch run after Jones' double. It was the 10th RBI of the season for Snow.