

Baker Takes MMC Men’s Basketball Helm



P&D FILE PHOTO
Andrew Baker watches from the end of the bench during a Mount Marty College home men's basketball game this past season. Baker, an assistant the past two seasons, was announced as the new head coach of the program on Thursday.

BY JEREMY HOECK
jeremy.hoeck@yankton.net

Ten days after the vacancy came open, Mount Marty College has its new head men's basketball coach.

Enter Andrew Baker.

Baker, a 26-year-old who spent two seasons as an assistant with the Lancers, was announced Thursday as the new head coach at Mount Marty and begins his duties immediately. He replaces long-time coach Jim Thorson, who resigned last week after 18 seasons at the helm.

"It was kind of a combination of excitement and being humbled at the same time," Baker said Thursday afternoon, between phone calls to recruits and responding to text messages and voicemails.

"Having people on campus, from president (Joseph) Benoit to (athletic director) Chuck Iverson to the rest of the staff, see who I am and trust me with this is amazing."

A native of Broomfield, Colo., Baker graduated from Johnson & Wales University in 2010 and spent one season as an assistant coach at Thornton (Colo.) High School before coming to Yankton in 2011.

In his time on the bench at Mount Marty, the Lancers went 19-39 overall and 11-29 in the Great Plains Athletic Conference (GPAC). Al-

though he had another opportunity back home in Colorado, Baker applied for the MMC position and interviewed last week.

"I thought the interview went well," he said. "It's easy to say that, I guess, but I thought in my gut there was a good chance. There were two other really good candidates, but Chuck called me and told me there's a quiet confidence about me."

That confidence was apparent in his dealings with the Mount Marty players, according to Tyler Payer, who will be a junior next season. Payer, a former Tripp-Delmont-Armour stand-out, was involved — as were his teammates — in Baker's interview process.

"I think his expectations are spot on," Payer said. "He knows us guys want to win. There's no secret formula, he just expects hard work and dedication."

Both of which were characteristics evident in Baker's performance on the bench, Iverson said.

"I've been very impressed with his coaching ability and his charisma," Iverson said. "We all know this is a great fit for our program and for our school. He'll bring energy and enthusiasm from day one."

"The players were impressed with him and had great things to say. They liked playing for him."

Part of that, as Payer pointed out, is Baker's

age. At 26, he is at most four years older than his players and is not that far removed from his own playing days.

As GPAC commissioner Corey Westra said Thursday, young coaches seem to be the trend of late. Briar Cliff head coach Nick Nelson is 33 or 34, Westra said, and finished his second season leading the Chargers this year. And Ben Limback, a 1999 Concordia grad, was hired to lead his alma mater last month.

"We're in a time of college basketball where the younger people like Andrew are not inexperienced," Westra said. "You think young, you think inexperience, but we're not in that day in age anymore."

Westra pointed to Butler head coach Brad Stevens, who was promoted to head coach in 2007 at age 30 and quickly guided Butler to consecutive Final Four berths.

"I don't know that age means anything anymore," Westra said. "It just gives you renewed energy. And when you rejuvenate a basketball program, you want to relate to these kids."

Calling himself a "very personable guy who loves to talk," Baker said energy will not only be evident on the sidelines but on the court.

"I like to have a great relationship with the guys and be approachable," he said. "There's

Track & Field | South Dakota Region Meets

Parker Boys Claim 4B Championship

BY JEREMY HOECK
jeremy.hoeck@yankton.net

FREEMAN — Tristen Erickson must have been looking into his crystal ball.

The junior from Parker High School said early Thursday afternoon that he and his teammate Zack Anderson planned to finish 1-2 in the boys' high jump so his team would have a better chance to win the title at the Region 4B track meet in Freeman.

That's exactly how they finished and exactly where the Pheasants finished when the dust had settled — or to be more specific, when the rain had stopped falling after an hour delay.

"We went out there thinking we'll try for first and second, so we can get the points for the team," Erickson said after winning the high jump at 5-feet-8. "Normally I could probably go 5-10 or something, but I've been very inconsistent with those."

Though the high jump was contested earlier in the day, those 18 points sure came in handy later for the Pheasants.

Parker, third at last year's Class B state meet, won the region crown with a total of 127 points. Defending state champion Viborg-Hurley was second at 115, followed by reigning state runner-up Irene-Wakonda at 110.

Making the day even sweeter for Parker, its girls' team nearly took home first place as well. Host school Freeman finished first with 120.5 points, while the Pheasants were a close second at 113.5.

The boys' side proved to be the closer race, though.

Parker went 1-2 in the 1600-meter run, led by champion Duane Jongeling, and was also 1-2 in the 3200-meter run, led by champion Ryan Olson. Jongeling also anchored the winning 3200 and medley relays.

Viborg-Hurley, meanwhile, was keyed by a strong day from senior Trevor Jacobsen, who was part of four event titles. He won the 100-meter dash in a meet-record time of 10.7, won the 200 (23.2) and anchored the winning 400 and 800 relays for the Cougars.

His time in the 100 actually surprised him, he admitted.

"It felt good, but I had no idea I ran that fast," Jacobsen said. "I first thought, 'That can't be right, can it?' But I'm not complaining; I'll take it."

Senior Tyler Gerdes picked up 18 points for the Cougars, with a first place finish in the triple jump (43-5.5) and second in the long jump (20-11). Relays, though, were a big part of Viborg-Hurley's success Thursday, as was the case at the state meet a year ago in Rapid City.

"It takes three really good guys to get the baton to me, and they trust me to finish it off," Jacobsen said. "All we can do is try our best."

"That's what we've been doing all year, try our best and see if we can repeat last year."

It's the same situation for the Irene-Wakonda boys, who were led by senior Dustin Livingston. He accumulated 28 points on his own to help his team stay in the hunt.

Livingston won the 110-meter hurdles (15.9), took second in the 200-meter dash and won the pole vault (12-0). The Eagles actually finished 1-2-3 in the pole vault to roll up some crucial team points.

"We're pretty deep in the pole vault, so we can all help each other whenever we get a chance," Livingston said. "It's nice to have that kind of confidence in our team."

On the girls' side, depth was the story for the champion Freeman Flyers.

Sophomore Cailey Roth won the 400-meter dash (1:01.8) and 800-meter run (2:31.6). Freshman Taylor Hermesen had earlier in the day won the discus with a throw of 108-feet-4.



Five meet records fell and a sixth was tied during a high-powered Region 4B track and field meet, held Thursday in Freeman. Three records fell on the girls' side, with two more falling on the boys' side.
LEFT: Genevieve Clark of Gayville-Volin crosses the finish line in first place in the girls' 1600-meter run at Thursday's Region 4B track meet in Freeman. Clark set a meet record in that event, as well as in the 3200.
RIGHT: Trevor Jacobsen, front, of Viborg-Hurley sprints down the track during the boys' 100-meter finals at Thursday's Region 4B meet in Freeman. Jacobsen won the event with a meet-record time of 10.7. He was also a part of the Cougars' meet record in the 800 relay, as well as the team's meet record-tying time in the 400 relay.



JEREMY HOECK/P&D

Scotland Sweeps 6B Crowns Bucks 15th After First Day Of State Tennis

BY EMILY NIEBRUGGE
sports@yankton.net

Already having four state qualifiers going in to Thursday's meet, the Scotland Highlanders swept Thursday's Region 6B Track and Field Meet in Avon.

Scotland had a total of 113.5 points in the boys division, while South Central took second place with 110 points and Colome (84.5) placed third. Avon also placed fourth with 82 points, Menno (59) took seventh and Andes Central and Tripp-Delmont-Armour tied for eighth place with 46 points.

The Scotland girls had a total of 133 points, followed by South Central (128) and Hanson in third with 103 points. Andes Central placed fourth with 88 points, Menno (76) took fifth, Avon (46) came in eighth and Tripp-Delmont-Armour (22) was ninth.

Chase Mogck, a Scotland eighth grader qualified for state at the meet by placing second in the pole vault. He said despite the weather, which caused a two-hour rain delay, he was able to pull off a solid performance.

"The weather probably slowed some people down a little bit and the track was a little wet, and it might have had an effect on people mentally just because we sat here so long in between events, but I was really happy with the results," he said. "All I had to do was clear the opening during the pole vault, and I had it on my last jump, but I was really nervous before that getting ready to go. You just have to focus on what to do. One of my coaches told me just to not to think about it and keep going."

Mogck also said he looking forward to competing at state after watching his sister compete last year.

"We've all been doing a lot of work in practice, and it's a lot of run-

ning," he said. "Last year I went to state to watch my sister, so this year I'm excited to be there to compete and see what it's like on that end after everything has paid off."

Sophomore Blake Konstanz, who placed sixth in the 200 meter dash and first in the pole vault, said the chances to compete at state will only give runners more opportunities to see tougher competition.

"It's a fun experience making it to state and competing against harder teams than what you don't see around here. You don't necessarily think about it throughout the season, but we've pushed ourselves throughout the year," he said. "Now we're starting to push ourselves a lot more. It cut some slack on myself knowing I had qualified earlier, but you still work hard throughout the rest of the day."

Garrett Kotalik of Scotland placed first in the 100 meter dash and second in the 200 meter dash, Jonah Sturgeon (Avon) took first in the 200 meter dash and Logan Powers (Avon) placed first in the 800 meter run. Dan Stibral of Scotland placed first in the shot put as well as the discus.

Andes Central's Erica Kitchen-master placed first in the 100 meter dash and third in the 200 meter dash, with Hannah Just of Tripp-Delmont-Armour taking second in the 100 meter dash. Christy Mogck (Scotland) also placed first in the 200 meter dash, while her teammate Jessica Thum placed first in the 100 and 300 meter hurdles. Carley Skorepa (Scotland) took first in the shot put as well as the discus.

Avon head coach Brad Poppe said although the conditions weren't favorable, his athletes still did well.

"Both of our early qualifiers have done well, and ran this meet to see if they could better their time. I know the conditions weren't favorable for

SIoux FALLS & BRAN-DON — The Yankton Bucks scored 94 points to rank in 15th place after the opening day of the S.D. State Boys' Tennis Tournament, being held in Sioux Falls and Brandon.

O'Gorman, Stevens and Watertown share the lead at 332 points.

Yankton had one player advance to the quarterfinals in his flight, Jason Shindler at flight four singles. He advanced with a 6-0, 6-2 victory over Brookings' Shannon Manson, and will face top-seeded Jake Moran of O'Gorman today (Friday).

Also for the Bucks, Luke Rockne (flight one), Ben Jensen (flight two), John Fanta (flight five) and Paul Fanta (flight six) earned first-round singles victories before falling in the second round. Each remains alive in consolation play, as does flight three singles player Brandon Frick, who drew an unseeded by before dropping a second round match.

Yankton also had second round losses after unseeded byes at flight two and three doubles. Both drew byes in the consolation first round, advancing to today's consolation quarterfinals. The flight one doubles team of Rockne and Paul Fanta was eliminated in the first round of consolation play.

Vermillion scored six points on the opening day, thanks to a flight two doubles consolation victory from Will Card and Jacob Ford.



JAMES D. CUMBUREK/P&D

Yankton's Jason Shindler serves against Brookings' Shannon Manson during their flight four singles second-round match at the South Dakota State Boys' Tennis Tournament on Thursday in Sioux Falls.