

# Somsen, Jacks Ready For NCAA Regional Debut

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## Interest Leads To Growth For College Baseball

FAYETTEVILLE, Ark. (AP) — Dave Van Horn takes the time to remind his players every few weeks about just how good they have it.

It's not that the Arkansas coach revels in telling today's youth just how difficult the older generations had it; he's simply in awe of how far college baseball has come during his 25-year coaching career.

Armed with new stadiums, packed houses and a growing fan base, college baseball has seen a surge in interest over the last decade. The result has been better travel, equipment, facilities and exposure for a sport once relegated to a spring-time afterthought.

Spring might still be about college football in many parts of the country, but the gap between the gridiron's offseason and the diamond is closing in others.

"They know (how good they have it)," Van Horn said. "We are all lucky to have what we have, and it didn't always used to be this way."

The latest sign of the burgeoning interest in the college game will happen this weekend, when for the first time all 16 of the NCAA tournament regionals will be televised by ESPN. The network showed just six of the regional sites last season, four the year before, but it's committed to showing every pitch from every game this season on its various outlets.

"That shows you our investment in college baseball and how we feel about it," said Mike Moore, a senior coordinator producer at ESPN. "They've got something going."

ESPN has a long-standing history with college baseball, with this year marking the 34th straight season the network has shown the College World Series. However, showing regular season and conference tournament games only became more of an option as the network looked to fill programming voids created by the lost 2004-05 NHL season, said programming and acquisitions director Brent Colborne.

The end result was that nearly 1.4 million viewers on average tuned in to watch College World Series games on ESPN last year, with a peak of more than 1.9 million in 2009. The steady viewership was enough after last season for the network to look into showing all of the regionals — which it will do when the tournament begins across the country on Friday.

"We've never done it before, so we don't know what the results will be, but we do know there's an audience out there," Colborne said. "There's obviously a very, very passionate audience that really enjoys college baseball."

Larry Templeton, the former Mississippi State athletic director

Yankton native Layne Somsen got an eye-opening look Wednesday into the world of high-level Division I athletics.

Chartered flights to a private runway. Luxury buses waiting nearby. No hassle of carrying luggage. Doors being held open. Welcome to the NCAA Division I Baseball Championship, where even the small schools from the small states are treated like stars.

"Even when we came to the hotel, all the staff had SDSU patches on their shirts and had a big NCAA banner hanging up," Somsen, a senior pitcher for South Dakota State, said Wednesday from Eugene. "Then we walked in and could hear them playing our fight song over the speakers."

"Then like three steps later, I saw a guy wearing an Oregon hat."

That reminder brought the Jackrabbits back to earth, Somsen said, as they prepare for their first-ever appearance in the NCAA Tournament.

SDSU, which comes in with a record of 35-22 after winning the Summit League title Sunday, will square off with eighth-ranked Oregon (45-15) on Friday night at 8 p.m. Central in the Eugene Regional. The game will be broadcast on ESPN3.com.

"It's a different stage for us, obviously," Somsen said. "To have people blaring our fight song, that's a different feeling. We're all excited for it, though."

"To play on ESPN and play some big-name schools, you can't beat that."

Somsen, a 2008 Yankton High School graduate, has played a big role in SDSU's



Somsen

ascent to the national stage under second-year head coach Dave Schrage.

Named Summit League Pitcher of the Year last week, Somsen has posted a 4-5 record this season with a 1.92 earned run average. The hard-throwing righty has recorded 85 strikeouts in 84.1 innings, and has limited the opposition to a .209 batting average.

Before they even took the field this spring, however, Schrage made clear how high the program's expectations were — especially with long-time Summit League powerhouse Oral Roberts gone to another conference.

"He put up a sign in the dugout that said, 'Expect a dogpile on the (May) 25th,'" Somsen said. "He put it in the back of our minds. Since Oral Roberts was gone, it was definitely possible; we were thinking we could get there."

That the Jackrabbits did.

They blanked North Dakota State 2-0 and 1-0 in last Sunday's league championship series, displaying the stingy pitching SDSU rode all season. Somsen helped by pitching two scoreless innings in the final game, rebounding from a loss in the tournament opener to Western Illinois.

Since their dogpile celebration in Rochester, Mich., the Jacks have turned their attention toward Oregon, a school that reinstated its baseball program in 2009 after a long hiatus.

The Ducks, who played the nation's fourth-toughest schedule, lead the nation in sacrifice bunts (92) and are fifth in fielding percentage (.981).

"They're actually kind of a similar team to us, but they have more depth because they're a Pac-12 school," Somsen said.

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## Learning The Basics

# BUCKS BASKETBALL CAMP ROLLS ON



**ABOVE:** Yankton High School boys' basketball coach Chris Haynes, center, gives out some instruction Wednesday morning during the Bucks Basketball Camp at the Summit Center. Wednesday's grades 9-12 session brought in about 35-36 kids from two towns, Yankton and Scotland.

**LEFT:** Former Mount Marty College men's basketball coach Jim Thorson, center, gives out some instruction Wednesday morning during the Bucks Basketball Camp at the Summit Center.

**RIGHT:** With Yankton High School boys' basketball coach Chris Haynes, far left, looking on, this player drives to the basket Wednesday morning.

Photos by Jeremy Hoeck/P&D



## Reiff, Lions Eager To Shore Up Line, Protect Stafford

ALLEN PARK, Mich. (AP) — The Detroit Lions have several holes to fill on their offensive line, including both tackles. At least they had a familiar face working with the unit Wednesday.

Former left tackle Jeff Backus, who retired during the offseason after a 12-year career here, spent the organized team activities period watching and working with the linemen, especially those who are playing his former position.

"Jeff had a long career and it wasn't just because he was physically talented," coach Jim Schwartz said. "He's very interested in the guys, particularly the young tackles, and he just wants to impart his knowledge to those guys."

The Lions also lost right tackle Gosder Cherilus in free agency. Sec-

ond-year tackle Riley Reiff (a Parkston native), the Lions' first-round selection in the 2011 draft, made eight starts last year and could be Backus' successor on quarterback Matthew Stafford's blind side.

Rob Sims, who started all 16 games last season, figures to return to the left guard spot alongside center Dominic Raiola, who enters his 13th season and became the dean of the Lions after the retirements of Backus and placekicker Jason Hanson. Like Sims, Raiola started every game of last year's 4-12 campaign.

Those two and Reiff took snaps with Detroit's first-team offense Wednesday along with guard Rodney Austin and tackle Corey Hilliard, who was injured all last season. Schwartz was quick to point out, however, that the Lions are a long way from decid-

ing who will be the starting unit when the regular season begins Sept. 8 against Minnesota.

"Until we get really competitive, until we put shoulder pads on; we really won't know where those guys are," he said.

Schwartz said having Raiola back should help, even if he has to get used to playing with new teammates up front.

"He's used to playing with a lot of different guys but it's all the same scheme," he said.

The Lions used their third-round selection to take Kentucky guard Larry Warford and had a handful of players on the field Wednesday who are familiar with the team's scheme but lack experience.

The Lions are two years removed from a playoff berth and will need the

line to help spring free-agent running back Reggie Bush. He could thrive in coordinator Scott Linehan's offense, which has made use of speedy backs who can catch the ball out of the backfield in the past.

Stafford and All-Pro receiver Calvin Johnson connected on 122 receptions for an NFL-record 1,964 yards last season and Nate Burleson, a reliable target in 2011, is back after missing the last 10 games of last season with an injury.

Throw in effective tight ends Tony Scheffler and Brandon Pettigrew and Detroit has plenty of offensive weapons — if the line gives Stafford enough time to get the ball to them.

For now, Schwartz doesn't seem too concerned.

"Right now, it's too hard to tell," he said.

## Mount Marty Softball Signs Two Recruits

Mount Marty College announced Wednesday the signing of two players to the Lancer roster. Tripp-Delmont-Armour catcher Rachel Mora and Westwood High School (Sloan, Iowa) pitcher Allison Roepke will join the program.

Mora is a 5-foot-4 catcher from Tripp, who was a key player on the team that finished third in the state softball tournament in 2012. Her 2012 hitting statistics were: Avg. .315, AB 92, R 23, H 29, 2B 3, 3B 5, HR 1 RBIs 23, BB 12, and SO 4.

"She's a skilled catcher and has a good bat as well," Mount Marty head coach Albert Fernandez said. "Rachel is a solid student and will be a great addition to the MMC community."

Mora is the daughter of Mark and Pam Mora of Tripp, and will major in business administration at Mount Marty College. In addition to her softball award, Mora is receiving an academic achievement scholarship.

Roepke lettered in the sport during three of her years in high school. Her 2011-12 hitting statistics were: Avg. .295, AB 105, R 6, H 31, 2B 10, RBIs 33, BB 29, and SO 14. Her 2011-12 pitching statistics were: ERA 2.86, W-L 7-0, APP 14, GS 5, SV 1, IP 44, H 39, R 25, ER 18, BB 7, and SO 28.

"She's a skilled pitcher and is very coachable — not to mention she's a solid student," Fernandez said. "She's going to be a great fit with MMC and will be a wonderful addition to the Mount Marty community. We look forward to seeing her here next fall."

Allison is the daughter of Jan Roepke and Curt Roepke of Sloan, Iowa and will major in nursing at Mount Marty. In addition to her softball award, Roepke is receiving an academic incentive scholarship.



Mora



Roepke

## Wrestling, Baseball-Softball, Squash On IOC List

ST. PETERSBURG, Russia (AP) — And now for the gold-medal match.

Three months after wrestling got kicked out of the 2020 Olympics, the ancient sport is back in the frame and will compete against baseball-softball and squash for a spot in the games.

"We had the opportunity to have a second chance to compete," international wrestling federation head Nenad Lalovic said Wednesday after the three sports made the IOC short list. "We took the opportunity. We won the first match but there is another one to fight."

Of eight sports competing

for a place on the 2020 program, five were eliminated — karate, roller sports, sport climbing, wakeboarding and the Chinese martial art of wushu.

The IOC executive board decided to recommend wrestling, squash and baseball-softball to the full IOC assembly for a final decision on Sept. 8 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Only one will get through.

"We are competitors. We had seven and now we have two," said Lalovic, a Serb who has revamped FILA and led the campaign for reinstatement. "Be careful, we are good fight-

ers."

Despite a tradition dating to the Olympics of ancient Greece, wrestling was cut from the list of core sports by the IOC board in February. The decision caused an international uproar and prompted the United States, Russia, Iran and other countries to join forces in an unlikely political alliance to save the sport.

Wrestling has gone through a major upheaval since the rejection. Raphael Martinetti resigned as FILA president within days of the decision and was replaced by Lalovic, who won election as full-time leader 10 days ago.

## Grace Hires Bosley As Coach, AD

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Former major-leaguer Thad Bosley has been named athletic director and head coach of the new baseball program at a small college in Omaha, Neb.

Grace University on Wednesday announced the hiring of Bosley.

The 56-year-old Bosley was a career .272 hitter for five teams from 1977-90, twice leading the majors in pinch hits. Bosley will oversee a three-year plan to start programs in baseball, women's soccer, softball, men's and women's cross country and men's and women's track and field.

The school also plans to join the NAIA after having competed in the National Christian College Athletic Association.

After retiring as a player, Bosley was hitting coach for the Texas Rangers and Oakland Athletics and head coach at Bethany University and Arizona Christian.