

MMC Basketball Opens Season Today

Lancer Women Look To Get Back On Track

BY JILANNE DOOM
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After three 20-win seasons in a row, last season's .500 record fell short of the expectations held by many.

But because of a packed returning roster, the Lancers aren't concerned.

"We're looking forward to rebounding," Mount Marty women's basketball head coach Tom Schlimgen said. "We've got a lot of kids back and a lot of experience back."

The Lancers return nine letter winners, including six seniors, and bring in a slew of freshmen, some who could possibly contribute

right away. Because of the mix of returners and newcomers, one of the main focuses for the women this year is team camaraderie.

"We've got quite a few seniors including Alexa Berg who has been a three year player and so has Taylor Forsch," Schlimgen said. "So we're hoping that we get some good leadership there and that we gel. That we 'connect' — that's the word we use."

Although the Lancers only graduated two seniors last season, the team will have to fill the gap in the center left by All-American Kylie Gross. Along with Berg and Forsch, senior forward Brittany Little looks to play significant minutes and fill that gap. Of the eight

freshmen on the roster, forward Raquel Sutura of Tabor will also see time in the center position.

"We think we've got a really nice class of freshmen," Schlimgen said. "But when you've got 14 returners, I would say our freshmen, with the exception of Raquel, will be getting most of their time with our JV schedule."

Another newcomer looking to make an impact for the Lancers can't be found on the roster — not anymore, at least. Former Mount Marty basketball standout Jenny (Miller) Krier has been added to the coaching staff as an assistant

MM WBB | PAGE 8A

MMC Men Hope Health, Newcomers Lead To Success

BY CHRIS RILEY
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Following a season where they finished 11-18 after a promising 8-4 start, the Mount Marty Lancers will count on a local talent's return from injury to lead them into the 2012-2013 season.

Lennox native Austin Harms helped lead the Lancers to five early-season wins last fall, averaging nearly 12 points per contest, before suffering a season-ending knee injury in the eighth game of the year. Following the injury to Harms the Lancer's struggled offensively, hitting the 60-point mark just 11 times in their first 21 games after scoring at least 61 in

their first eight contests.

The 6-6 senior is joined by four other returning letterwinners from last year's squad that finished 7-13 in conference play before losing to Northwestern in the first round of the Great Plains Athletic Conference (GPAC) tournament.

Joining Harms in leading this year's squad is senior Joe Hieb. Hieb, a Chamberlain native, is a two-time letterwinner for the Lancers and was named All-GPAC Honorable Mention last season while averaging 11.7 points per game and playing in all of the Lancer's 29 contests.

The other returning letterwinners include seniors Jeff Larsen (1.23 PPG, 1.0 RPG) and Scott

Odekir (5.22 PPG, 3.19 RPG), junior Chevy Fischer (4.27 PPG, 1.85 RPG) and sophomore Tyler Payer (1.81 PPG, .75 RPG).

Payer, a former Armour stand-out, has big hopes for the upcoming season.

"I think it's going to be a bright future," the 6-4 guard said. "We have a good nucleus and a lot of athletic guys. I think we can get out and run a little bit this year."

The handful of returners and a number of new talents have head coach Jim Thorson optimistic about what the Lancers can accomplish in the coming months.

"It is kind of an unknown as

MMC MEN | PAGE 8A

Gazelles Advance In 2AA

BY CHRIS RILEY
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An energetic Yankton Gazelles squad thrilled an equally lively home crowd with a sweep over Brandon Valley in the opening round of the District 2AA volleyball tournament at the Summit Activities Center on Thursday night.

The fired-up crowd, including an especially noisy student section, helped push the Gazelles to a 3-0 victory over their ESD rivals with scores of 25-20, 25-18 and 25-17.

Yankton, improving to 8-11 with the victory, came close to missing out on a home game to begin district play.

"When things were playing out at the end of the season I just kept telling the girls that it's not that important if we host a game or not," Gazelles head coach Leasa Woodward said. "But you saw tonight that energy really helped our kids and it did come down to being very important."

Gazelles senior standout Mikala Hora echoed those sentiments.

"We have a great student body who always comes out to support us," Hora said. "It's always fun to have your home crowd here."

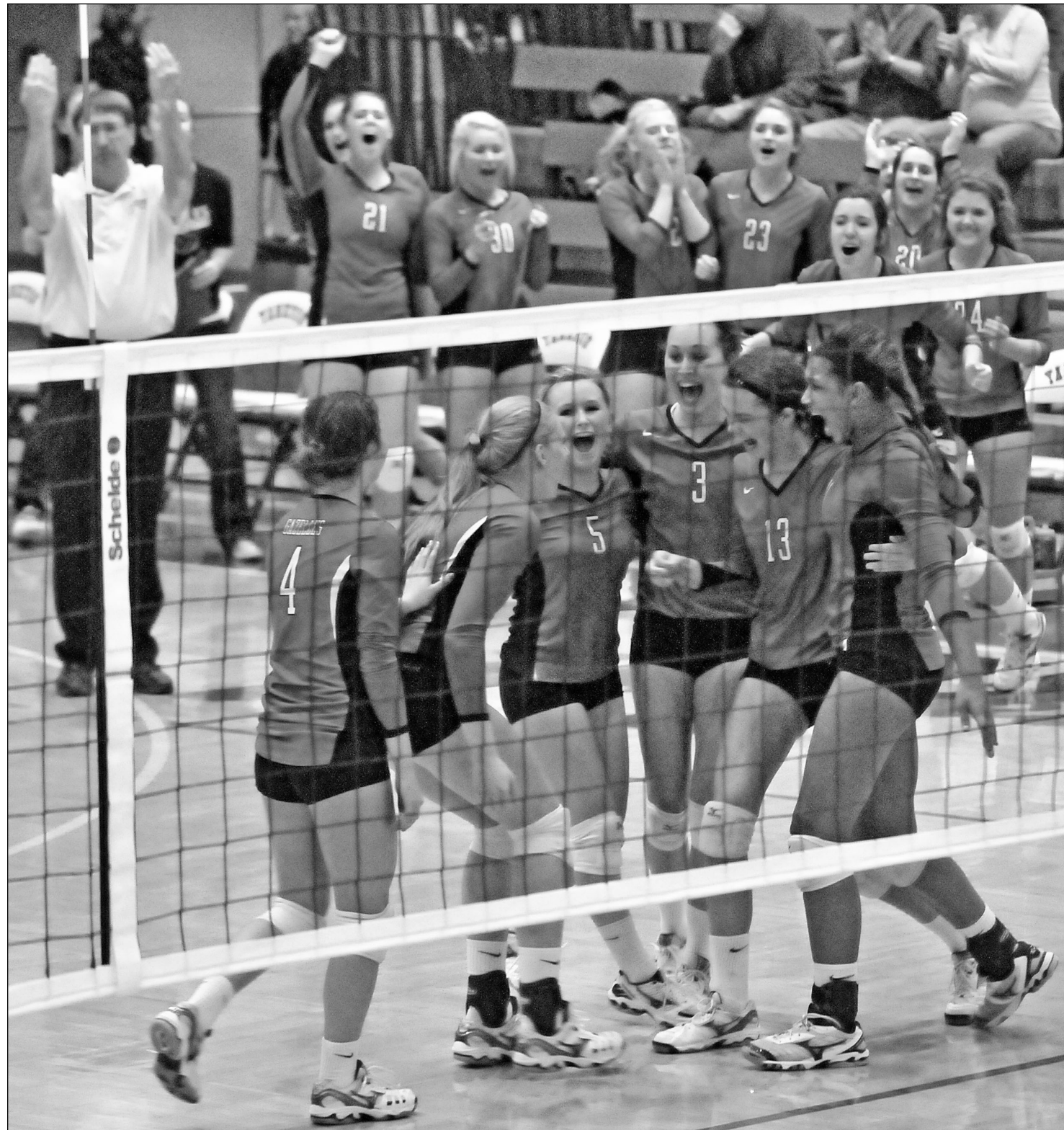
Yankton gave that crowd plenty to cheer about as they played neck and neck with the Lynx in the first game until taking a 17-15 lead with a 5-0 run midway through the first.

Senior Kelsey Fitzgerald recorded a huge block to give the Gazelles the 24-20 edge and Yankton sealed the 25-20 victory on the next play.

"The reason we win is because Mikala and Kelsey do what they do but everybody else just stepped up their game a little bit and that's the reason we looked as aggressive and powerful as we did," Woodward added.

In the second game, Yankton trailed the Lynx early, 10-8, but took a 13-11 lead after a 4-0 run and never looked back as they used four more multi-point runs to take the commanding 25-18 victory.

Brandon Valley took a 9-7 lead in game three and finally looked to be finding a rhythm when Hora sprinted after a wild dig towards the end bleachers and got to the ball just in time to keep it in play.



Yankton Gazelles players and reserves celebrate the Gazelles clinching the opening set of their District 2AA Volleyball Tournament match with Brandon Valley on Thursday at the Summit Center. Yankton swept the Lynx, advancing to the championship against Sioux Falls Washington on Tuesday in Sioux Falls.

JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

GAZELLES | PAGE 8A

USD Volleyball Facing Big Weekend With Jackrabbits, Bison Coming To Dome

BY JEREMY HOECK
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VERMILLION — Not only is it 'rivalry' weekend for the University of South Dakota volleyball team, it's also a make or break situation for the Coyotes.

A pair of matches this weekend with South Dakota State and North Dakota State will determine whether or not USD (11-14, 5-8) — which at one point this season lost six straight matches — advances to the four-team Summit League Tournament.

First comes a showdown with SDSU tonight (Friday) at 7 p.m. in what is expected to be a sellout at "The Den" on the second level of the DakotaDome in Vermillion.

From there, the Coyotes host NDSU at 2 p.m. on Sunday.

"It's crazy to think, for as rough of a stretch as we had, we're not out of it," USD head coach Matt Houk said Thursday after practice. "We're not in control of our destiny, though, but to even have a shot to get in there is pretty cool."

"It makes these matches very important," he added. "It's nice to put yourself in that position."

At 5-8 in conference action, the Coyotes would need two wins this weekend and some help to crack the top four. A single loss would all but eliminate them from post-season contention.

The overall balance of the Summit League has been the talk in volleyball circles, especially

considering long-time power North Dakota State — the two-time defending champions — sits in sixth place at 6-7.

"In one year, the league has changed so much," Houk said. "Last year there was a definitive line between the top and bottom, but this year there's not. "It's any any-given-night kind of thing."

Tonight is no different, as third-place South Dakota State (16-10, 8-5) comes to Vermillion. The Coyotes have defeated the Jackrabbits each of the past four meetings.

SDSU will be without senior standout Kelli Fiegen, a Parkston native who is day-to-day after suffering an undisclosed injury last weekend.

"We've planned like Kelli would be on the floor," Houk said. "We want their best. You never want to see something happen like that. Beyond Fiegen, they're a very talented team."

"They've definitely got other weapons."

Including the NDSU match on Sunday, the Coyotes will either close their season against two long-time rivals or do enough to possibly advance to their first Division I post-season event.

"The Dakotas weekend is always fun, it's what college athletics is all about," Houk said.

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Humphrey Foils Wynot's State Tourney Hopes

BY JEREMY HOECK
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RANDOLPH, Neb. — A show-down with a defending state champion and one of the state's best hitters proved too much of an obstacle for the Wynot Lady Blue Devils.

Wynot, though, put up a valiant effort against last year's Class D1 champion Humphrey Lady Bulldogs, but Humphrey pulled out a 3-1 victory in Thursday night's District D2-2 volleyball final in Randolph, Neb.

Set scores were 25-23, 25-23, 20-25, 25-20, proof that yes, it was a rather competitive night.

"We fought hard, but sometimes it doesn't go your way," said Wynot junior Schulte, who led the Blue Devils with 14 kills.

It was another hitter, however, that dominated the night. Humphrey senior Alyssa Frauendorfer, a 6-foot volleyball and track standout, pounded home 26 kills.

"When you have good hitters, it's hard on defense to get anything going," Wynot coach Tammy Wieseler said. "It makes you play a lot of defense."

The Blue Devils even tried serving at Frauendorfer when she was in the back row, to take her out of the "momentum of the offense," Wieseler said.

"We said in the beginning that we'll give her all the credit," Wieseler said. "A hit's a hit, you just have to move on."

Wynot actually held a late lead in the opening set, at 23-21, but the veteran Lady Bulldogs didn't back down and rallied with four straight points to win.

Set two was more of the same,

as Wynot rallied from a 16-20 deficit to tie the game at 22-22. Humphrey, however, took control and held off the Blue Devils.

The third set was marked by a renewed energy from Wynot, which jumped ahead 17-12 and 23-18 on the way to the victory — frustrating, at times, the Lady Bulldogs.

"We just told our girls to relax and do what we do," Humphrey head coach Gary Bender said. "Keep being aggressive and stay with it."

The Lady Bulldogs did that in set four, holding off a Wynot surge. The set was tied at 18-18 before the Humphrey lead hit 23-18 — thanks to the right arm of Frauendorfer.

"She's really hard to stop," Schulte said. "You know she'll get her kills and get her blocks, but you just have to take it and move on."

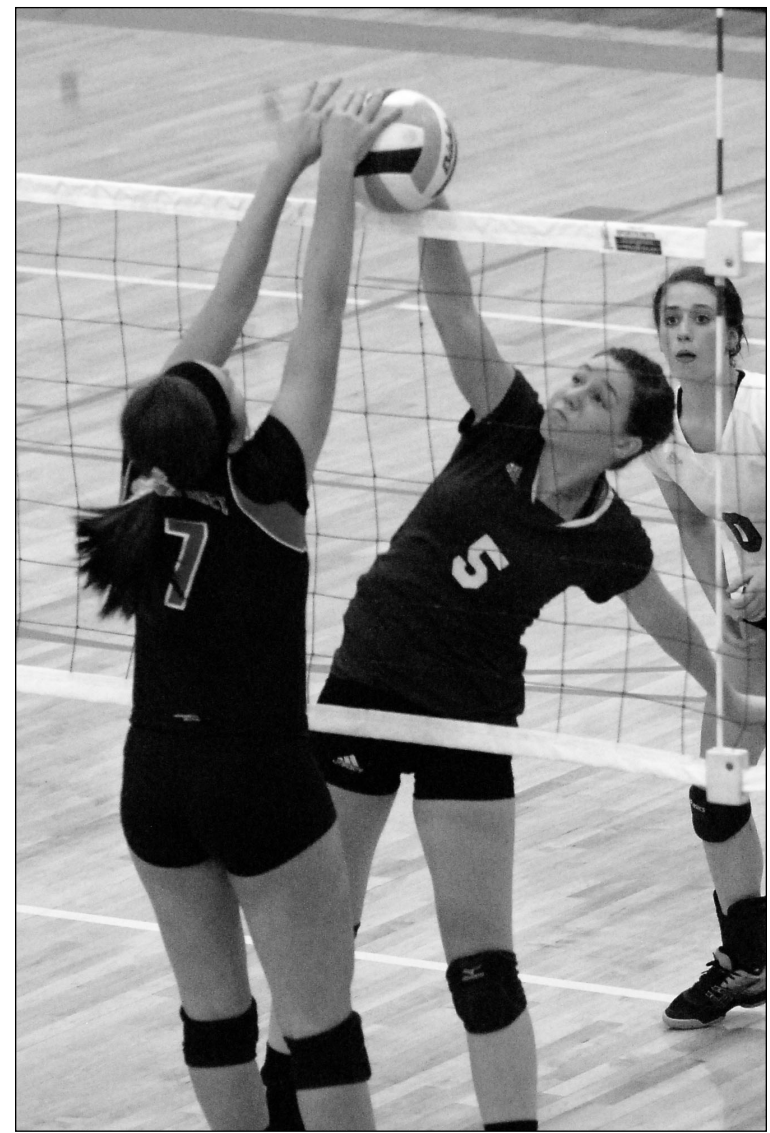
Wynot, however, will not moving on. The Blue Devils end their season at 18-17, a year after advancing to state and losing in the first round. For a squad that lost five starters from 2011, the 2012 campaign was one to remember, Wieseler said.

"We said all year long that we'll take bumps and bruises along the way, but hopefully we'd be playing well at the end," Wieseler said. "We gave a good team a run for their money."

Shelby Hochstein, one of 10 seniors for the Blue Devils, added eight kills in the loss, while Ashley Heine had 16 digs and three kills. Jenna Heine helped the defense with 11 digs.

"We knew it'd be really tough, but we all wanted it," Schulte said. "We came close."

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JEREMY HOECK/P&D

Wynot's Samantha Wieseler, 5, goes up to the net for a spike against Humphrey defender Ellie Geyer during their District D2-2 final Thursday night in Randolph, Neb.

LANCERS | PAGE 8A