

# 11B Gameday: Mirror Images Face Off In Final

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VERMILLION — If you watched offensive film on the Winner Warriors and Tri-Valley Mustangs without looking at the colors of the uniforms or the jersey numbers, you might think you were looking at two films on the same team.

Today (Friday) at the DakotaDome, though, the teams will get to see who does what they do better.

Similar offensive strategies and personnel types will face off in the Class 11B final, a matchup of two programs with proud histories. Winner has won four titles, the last of which came in 2009 — against Tri-Valley in a game that was decided on a tipped-

ball touchdown on the game's final play. The Mustangs have won three titles since 2007, including last year's 11B crown.

"Tri-Valley has been, without question, the most dominant team in Class 11B over the last six years. They have the athletes," said Winner head coach Dan Aaker. "They know what it takes to get there."

The offensive similarities made for some unusual pre-championship feelings during preparations for the game.

"It's been an easy-on-the-brain kind of week," said Tri-Valley head coach Steve Bazata. "It's been easy to prepare for plays. We've been working on getting kids mentally prepared for a physical battle."

The Mustangs have the big horses

up front, with an average of 230 pounds on the front line, bolstered by 300-pound senior tackle Chris Hubbell. Even without Hubbell starting both ways, the Mustangs' defensive front averages 221 pounds across the front.

"They're big up front, bigger than we are," Aaker said of the Mustangs' line.

Those "big boys" have cleared the way for a run game that has generated 3,049 yards and 41 touchdowns this season. Senior Logan Koopman has gotten the lion's share of the yardage, with 1,252 yards and 15 scores. Full-back Sam Mader (605 yards, 9 TD) and wingback Logan Otto (500 yards, 5 TD) have provided good changes of pace.

"We have three running backs that we feel comfortable handing the ball to," Bazata said. "Koopman's our big play guy, Mader can get to the hole and Otto's a good runner and receiver (team-best 15 catches for 284 yards, 7 TD). It's nice to have three like that to spread the ball around to."

Charged with stopping the Mustangs' stampede toward the endzone is a Winner defense that has kept a lot of teams out of the endzone. Winner has recorded six shutouts on the season and held two other opponents to single touchdowns.

"We talk about getting all 11 guys to the ball," Aaker said. "We play gap

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JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

Deubrook's Dustin Trooien, 8, congratulates teammate Ryan Knutson after Knutson's 63-yard touchdown run in the Dolphins' 25-22 victory over Howard in the S.D. Class 9AA football championship game on Thursday at the DakotaDome.

## Dolphins Hold Off Howard 25-22

BY JEREMY HOECK  
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VERMILLION — The game clock was not kind to the Howard Tigers. And on the flip side, it favored the Deubrook Area Dolphins.

A 25-6 halftime lead appeared comfortable for the Dolphins, but Howard roared back to make things interesting. Ultimately, the Tigers came up just short as Deubrook Area held on for a 25-22 victory in Thursday afternoon's Class 9AA championship game in Vermillion.

The collective sigh of relief was no doubt audible across the DakotaDome, even if the players on the field were trying not to look at the clock.

"We didn't have any doubts," said Deubrook Area senior tailback Ryan Knutson, who was named the Joe Robbie MVP after rushing for 262 yards. "We believe in each other and knew we could hang on together."

That's exactly what the Dolphins had to do after a dominating start.

Despite rolling up 395 yards of total offense, Deubrook Area (12-0) put together offensive series of a fumble, punt, turnover on downs, punt, punt and punt after halftime.

Howard, meanwhile, capitalized. Evan Donahue's 10-yard touchdown run at the 2:56 mark of the third quarter brought the Tigers within 25-14.

The next drive for the Tigers resulted in a turnover on downs, while their next series came up just short — by inches — on fourth down. They responded with an 11-yard touchdown pass from Landon Laible to Steve Larsen, followed by a conversion, to climb within 25-22 with two minutes to play.

"We never freaked out. We stayed calm and played our game of football," Deubrook Area head coach Adolph Shephardson said. "They don't let things like that get them done. They knew we just had to get some zeros and we'd win."

Howard's ensuing inside kick failed, and one short run play ran out the clock.

"This says that we have a lot of heart," Knutson said.

"We always stick together, we never get down on each other and we pick each other up."

Knutson played a big role in his team building that early lead. He scored on a 62-yard touchdown run on his team's first drive, and, following an interception, needed just two plays to scamper 63 yards for another score. The 14-0 lead

Knutson carried the ball 13 times for 244 yards in the first half, with those two long touchdowns. His big chunks of yardage — 18.8 yards a touch — forced Deubrook Area's defense to play 39 snaps in the first half.

"The biggest difference, and you could probably tell, we were on defense most of the first half," Shephardson said. "Our defense got really tired at the end, but we held on. The first half we played great football, probably as good as we've played all year."

Still, the Tigers (9-3) — who came in as the eighth seed — held the Dolphins to 109 yards in the second half and kept them off the scoreboard.

Most importantly for Howard, it limited Knutson to 18 yards on 11 carries over the final two quarters to set the stage for the big comeback.

"Wish we could have played the first half like we did the second half," Howard head coach Pat Ruml said. "This hurts right now because we expected to win this game."

"Deubrook played a great game. They're the state champions and they played like it."

Dolphins' quarterback Taylor Olsen completed 7-of-11

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JEREMY HOECK/P&D

Canistota's Nick Hofer dives for the end zone for a touchdown, while Warner defender Adam Ochsner tries to bring him down during Thursday's Class 9A championship at the DakotaDome in Vermillion.

## 9A: Hawks Air It Out

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK  
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VERMILLION — Just when the state got used to the Canistota Hawks pounding teams into submission with their bruising ground game, the Hawks pulled out a new trick.

They took to the air.

Canistota set five Class 9A championship records — all involving the passing game — in a 52-8 rout of Warner in the South Dakota 9A championship football game on Thursday at the DakotaDome.

The victory capped a third consecutive undefeated season and a third straight title for the Hawks, who won the 9B title in 2010 and the 9A title last season. For senior quarterback/defensive back Cody Bunger, Joe Robbie MVP for a second straight year, the run is the culmination of years of chemistry.

"Our class has great camaraderie," he said. "This team has played together since third grade. We've learned each other's

strength and weaknesses. We were always hoping we'd get here, but it was not what we expected.

"It's all worked out for the best. I'm glad it did."

Bunger set a finals record with 294 passing yards, going 12-13 passing for three touchdowns. His 24 yards rushing gave him 318 yards total offense, also a 9A record.

"Cody throws a very catchable ball, and he doesn't try to force it in," said Canistota head coach Lenny Schroeder. "We run layered routes so he has plenty of targets. Our kids do a good job."

Bunger's top target, Nick Hofer, finished with seven catches for a 9A final record 195 yards, as well as two scores.

"Hofer's a good football player, the one nobody knew about," Schroeder said. "Everyone knew about our running game and our quarterback but,



JEREMY HOECK/P&D

Canistota quarterback Cody Bunger gets off a pass before the pressure of the Warner defense takes him down during Thursday's Class 9A championship game at the DakotaDome in Vermillion.

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## Cedar Catholic Battles Past Wood River, Heads To C2 Semis

GRAND ISLAND, Neb. — Hartington Cedar Catholic used a big night from Lexi Steffen to claim a 20-25, 25-22, 25-11, 25-13 victory over Wood River in the opening round of the Nebraska State Class C2 Volleyball Tournament on Thursday at Grand Island Northwest High School.

The victory earned the Lady Trojans (29-5) a matchup with the top-ranked and second-seeded Hawkettes of Hastings St. Cecilia (30-3), an 11 a.m. matchup today (Friday) at Grand Island High School.

"This is one we've been looking forward to," said Cedar Catholic head coach Adam Kuntz in a phone interview after Thursday's victory. "They're number one in the polls, we've been around 2-3-4. We're going to get to

bed early, get up and hopefully play some good volleyball."

Wood River (25-8) took the opening set and led the second set 22-20 before the Cedar Catholic net game took over.

"We got five blocks in a row," Kuntz said. "Our defense started to read their arms better."

Lexi Steffen finished with 20 kills, 10 blocks and six ace serves to lead the Cedar Catholic attack. "We rode Lexi on both offense and defense," Kuntz said.

Also for Cedar Catholic, Karlyssa Noecker had six kills and Siera Becker had five kills. Emily Schrempf finished with 34 assists.

For Wood River, Hope Lambrecht had 12 kills and Connor Fischer had nine kills to lead the way. Alexis Burghardt finished with six kills and five ace serves.

## Amy Williams Era Opens For Coyote Women

BY CHRIS RILEY  
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VERMILLION — Following a successful 2011-2012 season that saw them go 23-8 (12-6 Summit League), the University of South Dakota Coyotes women's basketball team begins the 2012-2013 campaign a changed but still highly optimistic squad.

The Coyotes, who open their season today at Cleveland State (12-19 last season), return only two starters from a year ago. Onida-native Alexis Yackley and Elk River, Minnesota's Tempestt Wilson, both seniors, will lead the charge from the guard position for this young USD team - nine of the 15 players on USD's roster are freshman or sophomores.

Yackley, who played her freshman year at Iowa State, started 30 of the Coyotes' 31 contests a year ago and led the Summit League in

assists per game (4.8). Wilson started all 31 games last season and finished third on the team in scoring with 8.6 points per game.

Other returning upper-classmen for the Coyotes include senior forward Pam January (appeared in 28 games last year) and senior guard Sam Mehr (23 games played in 2012-2013).

Junior Polly Harrington transfers to USD from Johnson Country Community College. The 5-11 Kansas City native, who played her freshman season at Louisville, averaged 11.1 points and 6.7 rebounds per game while shooting 50 percent from the field for JCCC last year.

Of all the new faces to join USD this season, perhaps the most excitement has come from the addition of head coach Amy Williams. Williams, a Spearfish native who played basketball at Nebraska, takes the reigns of the Coyotes after spending the past five years

at Rogers State University. Williams helped the Oklahoma school launch their basketball team and built the Hillcats into an NAIA contender. She spent the previous six seasons before that as assistant coach/recruiting coordinator at Oklahoma State (2001-2005) and Tulsa (2005-2007).

Williams noted that the energy level surrounding the Coyotes is high following a season that saw them make the second round of the WNIT.

"From the moment I was on campus in the interview process you feel this buzz of excitement around USD athletics," Williams commented on media day.

"That buzz has continued with our team," she added. "Since we've been able to get out on the court it's just been a fire - there's an excitement."

The Coyotes will need big efforts from a number of underclass-

men as the graduated trio of Amber Hegge, Annie Roche and Jodie Boss accounted for nearly 60 percent of the scoring and 52 percent of the rebounds from last year's team.

As if that loss was not difficult enough, the Coyotes also are without five of their 15 players for the upcoming season due to injuries.

Junior McKayla Knudson (2.7 points, 1.4 rebounds per game last year), sophomores Kelly Stewart and Taylor Moore and freshmen Taneesha Greaves and Madison-native Bailey Milne will all redshirt due to season-ending injuries.

Those losses mean that USD is down to only 10 players for the entire season - five returners and five newcomers.

"I think we have a good mix of returners who are being great leaders for our program and newcom-

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