

## National Signing Day

# Local, Area Athletes Decide Fates

## Walker, Reeg Sign With South Dakota Volleyball

VERMILLION — University of South Dakota head volleyball coach Matt Houk is pleased to announce the signings of Haley Walker of Lakeville, Minn., and Audrey Reeg of Dubuque, Iowa, to national letters of intent. Both plan to enroll at USD and compete with the Coyotes in the fall of 2013.

"I want to welcome both Haley and Audrey to the 'Yote volleyball family," said Houk. "They are great additions to our program and I could not be more proud to have them join our team."

Walker, a 5-foot-10-inch middle

blocker at Lakeville North High School, played a key role in leading coach Walt Weaver's Panthers to the big-school state championship for the second time in three seasons. Weaver totaled 19 kills in three state tournament games. She led the Panthers in kill percentage and her 74 blocks ranked 14th in the state.

"Haley has a great vertical and will add a lot of quickness to our middle attack," said Houk. "We love how hard she competes on every ball and that she comes from a tradition of success

at Lakeville North. She is a special athlete."

Reeg, a 5-foot-10-inch outside hitter at Dubuque Hempstead High School, earned first-team, all-state honors after leading coach Randy Dolson's Mustangs to the quarterfinals of the state tournament. Reeg had a match-high 30 kills and added 18 digs in the quarterfinal match. She averaged 3.9 kills per set this season, the second-best average in Iowa Class 5A.

"Audrey is a great all-around volley-

ball player who possesses a high volleyball IQ," said Houk. "She is a six-rotation, left-side attacker and proved to be one of the best at that position in the state of Iowa. Audrey has a competitor's mentality. We expect her to continue our tradition of great left-side attackers at USD."

Walker and Reeg join a program that won five consecutive matches to cap the regular season. The Coyotes finished 14-14 overall and 8-8 in Summit League play.



P&amp;D FILE PHOTO

Crofton's Bridget Arens (24), shown here during the 2012 Nebraska State Girls' Basketball Tournament, signed Wednesday to play Division I basketball at the University of South Dakota.

## Crofton's Arens Headed To USD

BY JEREMY HOECK

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CROFTON, Neb. — Choosing where to make the transition from small-town Crofton to a mid-sized college campus was anything but an easy call from Bridget Arens.

Ultimately, though, comfort and opportunity won out for the Lady Warriors hoops standout.

Arens, a 6-foot first team all-state forward for defending champion Crofton, sent in her National Letter of Intent Wednesday night to play Division I basketball at the University of South Dakota, a school less than 40 miles from her home.

"I've always wanted to play college basketball, but where I didn't know," Arens said Wednesday from Crofton High School. "I had to decide how far from home I wanted to be. I want my family to come see me and I want to still watch my sisters play."

"It's just one of those things where the opportunity was too good to pass up."

Arens averaged 16.1 points and 7 rebounds per game as a junior last season for Crofton, which won the Nebraska Class C2 state title. She said she had already been in contact with USD assistants by that point, and that her interest in the Coyotes didn't wane after former coach Ryan Williams left for Colorado State in May.

No, in the end, it was a chance to be close to home that put her over the top, despite an offer from the University of Sioux Falls.

"That was my probably my number one thing," Arens said. "Support is a big part of the game, and staying close to home, hopefully there's some support. Even if it's just family, it's still a big thing to me."

Though she missed the state tournament as a sophomore in 2010 because of a concussion, Arens continued to progress and remained close to the USD program — another Crofton native, Amber Hegge, played for the Coyotes.

"I think it was probably a goal of hers (Arens) the last couple years to make that happen," Crofton coach Aaron Losing said. "USD was a school she had in mind all along, and was hoping to get an offer from."

"She's been over there to watch a lot of games, so I'm sure that was motivating for her."

Arens was able to progress her game this past summer while playing AAU basketball for Pinnacle Bank Nebraska, an op-

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JEREMY HOECK/P&amp;D

Yankton High School seniors Kelsey Fitzgerald, left, and Mikala Hora are all smiles during their signing ceremony at YHS. Fitzgerald signed to play Division II basketball at Nebraska-Kearney and Hora officially inked to play D-I volleyball at South Dakota State.

# Yankton Duo Secure Their Future Destinations

BY JEREMY HOECK

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Though they took separate paths to their college choices, Mikala Hora and Kelsey Fitzgerald were each relieved to make their decisions final.

The Yankton High School seniors each inked their National Letters of Intent on Wednesday as part of the early signing day period, with Hora signing to play Division I volleyball at South Dakota State and Fitzgerald agreeing to play Division II basketball at Nebraska-Kearney.

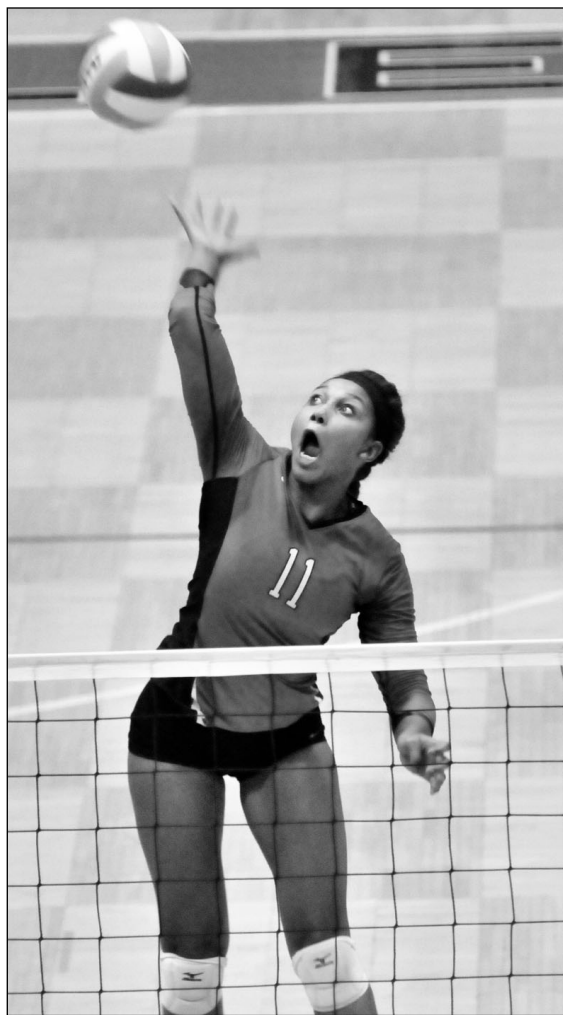
Despite pursuing different sports and making their decisions at different times, the feelings Wednesday were the same.

"It's still a big relief to finally make it official," Hora said during a signing ceremony at YHS. "I don't have to worry about, 'Oh did I remember this, or am I forgetting that.' It's real now."

Fitzgerald's situation, however, was much more nail-biting, especially when it came to two big decisions.

"It's a weight off my shoulders, definitely," Fitzgerald said. "I had two big things to decide; where to go to school and what sport to play."

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# Class B: Parker, Andes Central Look For Gold In The Corn Palace

## Top-Seeded Pheasants Look For Unbeaten Finish

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK

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PARKER — For many teams, a third place finish at state means a sense of accomplishment. For the Parker Pheasants, it brought a hunger to do even more.

The Pheasants, 32-0 on the season and the top seed in the South Dakota State Class B Volleyball Tournament at the Corn Palace in Mitchell, look to finish an unbeaten season with the school's first state title since 1990.

"They've really pushed themselves in the off-season," said Parker head volleyball coach Jill Christensen, the state's all-time leader in volleyball coaching victories with 660 wins entering

today's (Thursday) opening round. "They want to see if we can get to the championship."

As they have in recent years, the Pheasants have built on dominating power and balance. Tessa Weeldreyer has 318 kills on the season, with Allison Sanner (253), Micalanne Hanten (205), Jessica McKenney (132) and Jamie Haase (108) also finishing plays.

"That really helps us when teams are trying to figure out how to defend us," Christensen said. "We have at times had a number of different girls step up. We have great balance and team chemistry."

The Pheasants have not just been a good offensive team, they have had strong defense as well.

Haase (76 blocks), Sanner (25 blocks), McKenney (22 blocks) and Amber Dysthe (20 blocks) have led the front-line defense, with Dysthe (329 digs), Hanten (282 digs), Morgan Hay (265 digs), McKenney (157 digs), Sanner (143 digs) and Kim Leber (139 digs) all recording big dig numbers.

"Their goal in the back row is to keep the ball alive so that we can get it to Amber," Christensen said. "We want to play power volleyball, and that starts with good passes."

Dysthe has provided a strong presence for the Pheasants at setter, recording 876 assists. She has

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## Andes Central Looking For More

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK

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LAKE ANDES — After falling one win short of state a year ago, Andes Central came into the 2012 season looking to get back to state. Now that this goal has been accomplished, the Eagles are looking for more.

Andes Central takes a 26-3 record into the South Dakota State Class B Volleyball Tournament, which begins today (Thursday) at the Corn Palace in Mitchell. The Eagles take on perennial power Arlington in the opening round.

Hanson took out the Eagles in the Region 6B final a year ago, a

disappointing end to a promising season according to Andes Central head coach Rocky Brinkman.

"We knew we had the team. We knew we were capable of playing a lot better than we did in last year's region match," he said.

While Andes Central is making their third trip to state in the past four years, the Eagles did not receive much attention this season until they knocked off Class A power Wagner in a Little Missouri Valley Conference match.

"We were flying under the radar all season. We didn't get any votes (in the South Dakota Sports-writers Association poll) until Wagner," Brinkman said. "The top

five teams in the state are pretty tough."

The Eagles went 13-1 at home, 13-2 on the road, but could have played better, according to Brinkman.

"We weren't putting things away like we should," he said. "It's hard to stay focused the whole season. They'd come out and win a set 25-9, then came back and lost the next one."

Andes Central has relied upon its defense. Kellie (311 digs, 83 blocks) and Krista (228 digs, 89 blocks) have led the way, with

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