

MMC Makes Long Trip Back To GPAC Tourney

Volleyball: Lancers Open First Post-Season Trip Since 2010 At Northwestern Tonight

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK
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For coach Candice Climer and the Mount Marty College volleyball team, today's (Saturday) matchup with Northwestern in the Great Plains Athletic Conference Tournament has been four years in the making.

This year's seniors made up Climer's first recruiting class, a group that came in after her first squad went 4-22 overall and winless in the GPAC. The Lancers won four GPAC matches — the most for the program since 2006 — and have won 12 matches overall this season, marking

online

■ Find video of MMC seniors and coach Candice Climer online at yankton.net

looking at it like, 'We won. We should be doing that,'" said senior defensive specialist Courtney Miller. "We knew from there that we wanted to make a

the first time since 2004-06 that the program has had double-digit victories in consecutive seasons.

"I remember when we got our first win against Dakota Wesleyan. Everyone was all excited, and we were all freshmen

difference."

One of the "differences" made was raised expectations.

"In preseason meetings, every single one of them said making the conference tournament was a goal," Climer said. "They set the goal and have been able to accomplish it. That's a huge thing."

It wasn't just the six seniors talking about those expectations, either.

"We've talked about it every game, even on the first day of tryouts," said senior setter Caitlyn Illg. "That was a big difference this year. We're not setting for one good game that we'll talk about. The tournament is what we

wanted."

MMC didn't just hope for better outcomes. The Lancers went to work, especially on defense. The team ranks fourth in the GPAC at 16 digs per set, racking up 1,852 digs on the season. MMC has also improved its blocking, with Allison Cross, Jena Peters and Laura Groseth all ranked in the top-20 in the league in blocks per set.

"Our defense has kept us alive," Climer said. "Coming into the conference, we realized how offensively-strong the other teams were. We had to pick up our defense to stay alive."

The Lancer offense has begun to pick up the pace as well. Cross is tied

for second in the league in hitting percentage (.296), and Sierra Kloth leads the Lancers at 2.7 kills per set, ranking 14th in the league.

The result has been Lancer victories over Morningside and Briar Cliff, including a season sweep of Morningside. MMC had not beaten either team since 2006 before sweeping both at home in October.

"The Mount Marty legacy in volleyball hasn't been the strongest," said senior outside hitter Roxy Ross. The last time MMC had a team contend for a NAIA Tournament berth was in 1993, before many on this year's squad were born. "But we play

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Yankton 27, Harrisburg 0



Yankton's Matt Fitzgerald, 83, and Sheldon Gant corral Harrisburg's Dylan Tams in the Class 11AA football semifinals on Friday at Crane-Youngworth Field. The Bucks held Harrisburg scoreless, winning 27-0 to advance to the state championship game, Nov. 14 at the DakotaDome in Vermillion.

JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

Domeward Bound

Yankton Beats Harrisburg To Advance To State Finals For First Time Since 2005

BY NICK ROBINSON • sports@yankton.net

After nine years of having an unsatisfied taste in their mouth, the Yankton Bucks football team is back to a familiar place: the DakotaDome in Vermillion.

"It feels good," Yankton head football coach Arlin Likness said. "I have 36 years in and it'll be my 12th stop in Vermillion. So, a third of the time we've gotten there. It was a long stretch, these kids deserve it. They don't let things set them back, they come together to get a job done."

The Bucks (10-0) defeated the Harrisburg Tigers 27-0 on Friday evening at Crane Youngworth Field for an 11AA semifinal showdown.

"I am so excited to finally get to the Dome," Yankton quarterback Mason Strahl said. "It was a team effort, we knew we would do whatever it took to win. We ran the ball, passed, and played great defense. It was a total team win for us tonight."

After a very even first quarter, Yankton's Brady Hale connected on a 49 yard field goal, to give Yankton momentum and a 3-0 lead going into the second period.

In the second quarter, the Bucks ran 11 straight running plays. Yankton was able to score the first touchdown of the game with seconds remaining. Yankton held a 10-0 lead going into the second half.

"We were able to go in different formations with backs," Strahl said. "All of our linemen helped us out tonight. Props to them for being able to get down and push them back."

To start the second half, after sucking four minutes off the clock, Yankton was able to strike again.

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Yankton Defense Draws Memories Of Titles Teams Past

BY JEREMY HOECK
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There is a reason former players were among the first to track down and hug head coach Arlin Likness.

His group harkens back to the glory days of Yankton Buck football.

The Bucks didn't back into the Class 11AA state title game. They didn't squeeze into the final. They didn't need help to get there.

They completely their competition.

Sound familiar, Yankton fans?

The biggest — and most noticeable — difference in this year's defense was on full display in Friday night's 27-0 pasting of Harrisburg in the Class 11AA semifinals at Crane-Youngworth Field.

"Our speed. We have a lot of speed," senior Jordan Lightner said.

Sound familiar, Yankton fans? Let's examine for a minute what



Jeremy
HOECK


the Bucks defense has done so far this season.

It played key roles in beating all four 11AAA teams on the schedule, it has now pitched three shutouts and has made pretty solid teams — Harrisburg twice — look rather pedestrian.

And if you narrow that to only games against 11AA opposition, the Bucks allowed an average of 5.2 points per game.

And for reference sake, Huron scored all 21 of its points in a first-round playoff loss against the Yank-

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