

P&D FILE PHOTO
Mount Marty's BreAnne Thege makes a diving save during the Lancers' Great Plains Athletic Conference volleyball match earlier this season. Thege was named second-team all-GPAC by a vote of the league coaches, announced Wednesday.

Thege Named Second-Team All-GPAC

Volleyball: Cross, Kloth Also Honored

BY JEREMY HOECK
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Small improvements for the Mount Marty College volleyball team were confirmed Wednesday in the all-league selections.

After a season in which the Lancers recorded their most Great Plains Athletic Conference wins since 2006, they put junior libero BreAnne Thege on the All-GPAC second team, while sophomore outside hitters Allison Cross and Sierra Kloth earned Honorable Mention recognition.

Three on the list? That's progress, according to head coach Candice Climer.

"That's what I told the girls, it's nice to have three of them up on the board," she said. "The coaches from the other programs are seeing what we're doing, the improvements we're making."

Mount Marty finished the season with a 12-21 overall record and a 4-12 mark in the GPAC. The Lancers earned their first trip to the league tournament in four years, ultimately losing to sixth-ranked Northwestern in the first round. Their three players recognized

Wednesday certainly played key roles in that effort, Climer said.

A year ago, the Lancers were only represented by two honorable mention selections — Cross and senior setter Caitlyn Illg.



Cross

Thege, a native of Columbus, Nebraska, played in all 33 matches this season, and recorded 555 digs for an average of 4.74 per set.

"That girl never let the ball drop, and the coaches saw that," Climer said. "She's everywhere on the court."

The Lancers saw first-hand how an opposing team adjusts its serving attack because of Thege. In the first-round match at the GPAC Tournament, Northwestern stopped serving the ball to Thege after she had seven digs in the first set.

And the best news for the Lancers? Thege, though listed as a junior, has two more seasons with the volleyball program.

It's the exact same situation with Cross and Kloth, who both also have

two more seasons of eligibility.

Cross, a native of Sioux Falls, played in 26 matches and recorded 232 kills and led the Lancers with a hitting percentage of .293, with 84 total blocks.

Time missed because of two injuries probably kept Cross from earning second team honors, Climer said.

"She was really hoping for it, too," Climer said. "That only motivates her for next year. She was putting some nice numbers."

In the case of Kloth, another Sioux Falls native, she saw a drastic improvement from year one to year two in the program, Climer said. Kloth recorded a team-high 308 kills in 33 matches and also added 39 blocks.

"She grew up so much with the consistency," Climer said. "For next year, I think that will continue to get better."

The Lancers will graduate seniors Courtney Miller, Kristen Boyle, Jena Peters, Laura Groseth, Roxy Ross and Illg.

You can follow Jeremy Hoeck on Twitter at twitter.com/jhoeck. Discuss this story at www.yankton.net.



Kloth

Eight Teams, One Summit



P&D FILE PHOTO
The Harrisburg Tigers celebrate their victory over Yankton in the District 2AA volleyball tournament. Harrisburg is making its State AA Volleyball Tournament debut when the event opens today (Thursday) at the Summit Center in Yankton.

State AA Tourney Begins

Volleyball: Teams Aim To Derail Knights' Repeat Performance

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK
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Sioux Falls O'Gorman (30-5) looks to defend its Class AA volleyball when the South Dakota State Volleyball Tournament invades Yankton's Summit Center, beginning today (Thursday).

The Knights face Pierre (8-15) at noon to start the action, followed by Huron (18-5) against Rapid City Stevens (25-7) at 1:45 p.m. Watertown (19-4) plays Harrisburg (12-10) at 6 p.m., followed by Aberdeen Central (20-2) against Sioux Falls Roosevelt (18-18) at 7:45 p.m.

The tournament runs through Saturday, with the championship set for 8 p.m.

Six of the eight teams in the field advanced to state a year ago. Besides O'Gorman, Roosevelt finished second, Aberdeen Central third, Huron fourth, Watertown sixth and Stevens seventh. Both Pierre and Harrisburg are at state for the first time since 2008. Harrisburg is making its first-ever Class AA appearance, as the Tigers moved up to the big-school class in 2013.

Here is a look at the eight teams, listed in order of seed:

O'Gorman

The Knights went to great lengths to prepare themselves for this post-season.

Virtually untouched by in-state competition — dropping just three sets in 19 matches — the Knights went to three out-of-state tournaments, including one in Las Vegas. Three of the Knights' five setbacks came in that Vegas trip.

"Any time you're playing different competition, it's good for the kids," said O'Gorman head coach Julie Kolbeck. "It keeps the girls on

edge. They have to be mentally and physically focused.

"It prepares you for post-season play, playing teams that play at a high level."

While O'Gorman's bigs — the 6-4 Creighton-bound Taryn Kloth and the 6-3 South Dakota State-bound (basketball) Jessica Mieras — Kolbeck is most proud of the work of her defense.

"We have such dynamic players. They do so much for me as a coach. I look at them, and it will be hard to see them go after this season," she said. "But these girls will tell you that they're nothing without the support. Unless you have the passers and setter, all the hitters in the world mean nothing."

"That's what makes everything more fun."

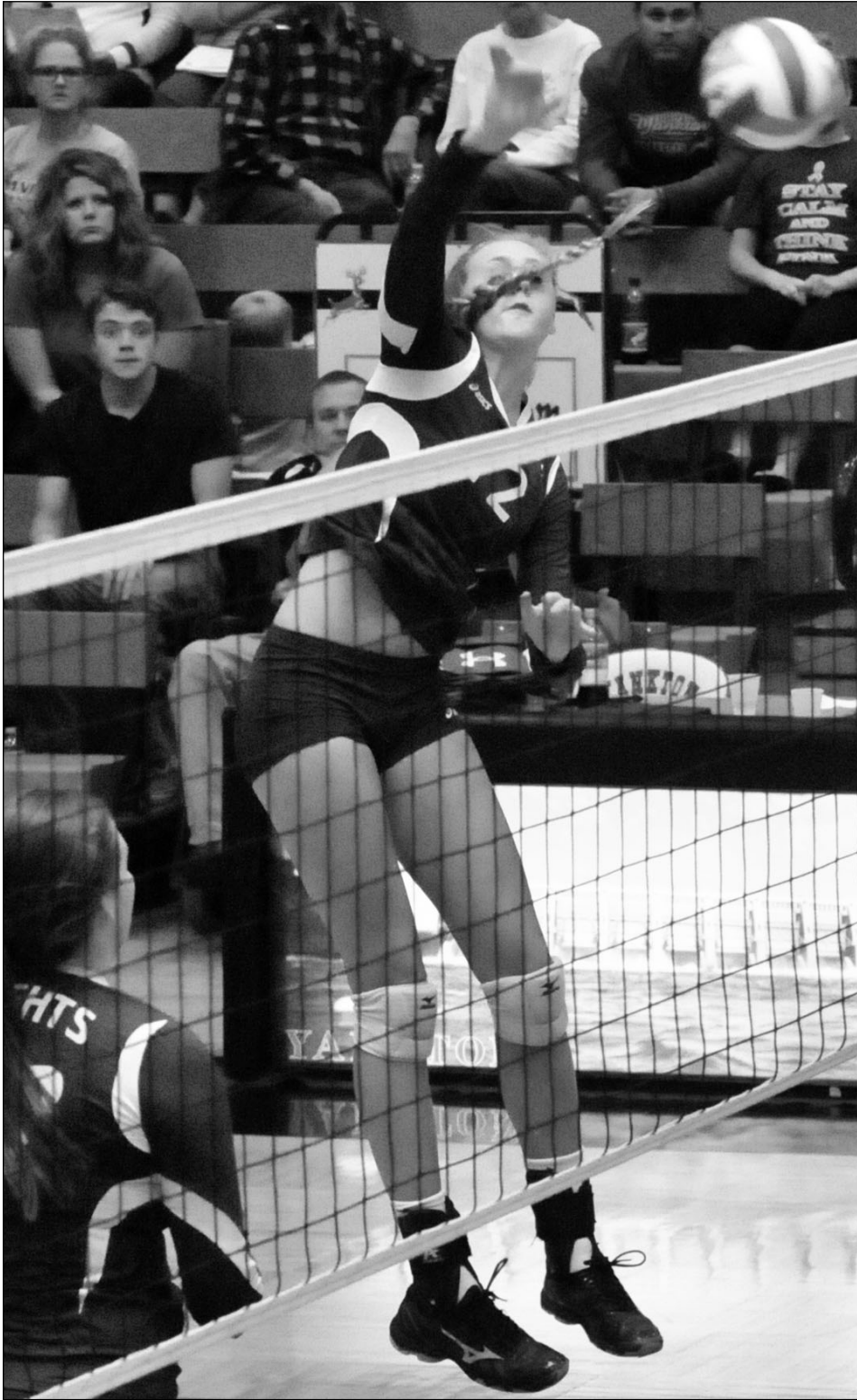
Kloth (307 kills, .353 hitting percentage, 169 digs, 35 blocks), Mieras (141 kills, 50 blocks) and Lauren Witte (152 kills, 180 digs) have powered the O'Gorman offense. Dalee Stene has 634 assists. Peyton Bjorkman (124 kills) and Kate Cartwright (51 kills) have also been effective offensively.

Witte leads the Knights with 180 digs, with Kloth and Delanie Stene having 169 digs each. McKayla Hermanson (141 digs) and Dalee Stene (111 digs) have also been strong in the passing game.

"Where we were hit hardest last year was in the back row," Kolbeck said. "The kids did a great job."

The Knights open with a Pierre team with a losing record, but Kolbeck sees a team that is peaking at the right time.

"Some people look at their record and say, 'What an easy draw,' but that is one of the scariest teams to draw," she said. "Their style is unorthodox."



P&D FILE PHOTO
Sioux Falls O'Gorman hitter Taryn Kloth, 12, attacks the ball during a match against Yankton earlier this season. Kloth and the Knights enter the S.D. State Class AA Volleyball Tournament as the top seed and the defending state champions.

Hoeck

Can Anyone Dethrone No. 1 O'Gorman?

BY JEREMY HOECK
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It's easy to look at this year's South Dakota State Class AA Volleyball Tournament and call it the 'O'Gorman Invitational.'

The Knights, after all, are the defending champions and are undefeated against in-state competition, and quite honestly, haven't really been tested by anyone inside the borders of the Rushmore State.

And yet, it's up to the remaining seven teams in the tournament field to put up a fight when action begins today (Thursday) at Yankton's Summit Center.

"A lot of things are going to have to happen for them to get beat," Huron coach Shelly Buddenhagen said Wednesday after her team went through its hour-long practice session. "I think all of us are thinking, 'OK, are we playing for second or third here?'"

"But that's why we play the games, you just never know."

That's the rallying cry for the rest of the field, which includes five teams from the Eastern South Dakota Conference (ESD) — an increase



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