

Jacks Close Out Coughlin-Alumni Era Today

SDSU Hosts No. 2 Illinois State Today

BY TYLER TEAL

Jackrabbit Sports Service

BROOKINGS – South Dakota State's football program bids farewell to Coughlin-Alumni Stadium on Saturday in a game that features more than just historical significance.

The Jackrabbits, ranked No. 11, have a chance to knock off Illinois State, the No. 2-ranked team in the country that lost a close decision in last year's national title game to North Dakota State.

The Redbirds are 7-1 overall and lead the Missouri Valley Football Conference standings at a perfect 5-0 so far this year, so an SDSU victory would give the old stadium a

also

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a 45-10 thrashing of the Jacks last season in Normal, Ill.

This season, Illinois State is averaging 35 points a game on the strength of a running game that has piled up an average of 213.6 yards a contest, and the Redbirds have pushed their winning streak to seven games since losing at Iowa 31-14 on Sept. 5.

fitting sendoff.

But that will be easier said than done, and recent history has not been kind to the Jacks. Illinois State has won the last three meetings, including

“[It's a] big, big game,” SDSU coach John Stiegelmeier said. “We had set our sights on wanting to be, attempting to be, a top-eight team. Illinois State is poised for that. If we think we're that type of team we need to rise up to the challenge.”

The Jackrabbits have reason to be optimistic.

Their defense is in the midst of its most stingy stretch in terms of points allowed in more than 50 years. Over the past four games, SDSU has allowed a total of 25 points – 6.3 points game. That marks the fewest points allowed over a four-game span since 1962, when the defense surrendered a combined 13 points in winning four straight victories – and eventually

the North Central Conference title.

The Jackrabbits rank No. 4 among FCS squads for scoring defense, allowing just 13.9 points a game.

With those stats in mind, Illinois State coach Brock Spack expects a tough test.

“It's just another part of the course in the Missouri Valley,” Spack said. “It's always difficult to win a Missouri Valley game, but particularly on the road. We've got a ranked opponent and they're very good. And they're always good.”

The Jackrabbits moved to 6-2 overall (3-2 in the MVFC) after pounding Missouri State 39-0 pounding last weekend. The win marked the team's first road shut-out since Stiegelmeier's second year in 1998.

“It was a comfortable game to

coach,” Stiegelmeier said of the win over the Bears. “It was a great effort, our cornerbacks played really well, the fat guys up front, our guys dominated them.”

Offensively for the Jackrabbits, starting-day quarterback Zach Lujan is back to full action after missing time with an ankle injury. He went 15-for-19 for 208 yards and two touchdowns against Missouri State.

“He's healthy and we had a good game plan for him,” Stiegelmeier said. “Reps matter. It came out this week that he got more reps and he played a lot better.”

But while Lujan appears to be back in the starting role, don't be surprised if you see freshman Taryn Christen get playing time – just as

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Spartans Open November Push Against Struggling Nebraska

BY ERIC OLSON

AP College Football Writer

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — The calendar has turned to November, the month when Michigan State has been its best under Mark Dantonio, and the sixth-ranked Spartans know exactly where they stand in college football's big picture.

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better focus on the task at hand. There's no reason to look past that,” Dantonio said. “But you also need to understand we have a great opportunity in front of us. Really we're in control of those opportunities. Nobody else. We have people left on our schedule beginning with this weekend that can start to tell the story of Michigan State.”

The Spartans (8-0, 4-0) sit No. 7 in the first College Football Playoff rankings. They've had narrow wins over Purdue and Rutgers and needed the play of the year in college football to escape Michigan with a victory.

With a Nov. 21 game at defending national champion Ohio State looming, they're in position to move up in the playoff race if they win at Nebraska (3-6, 1-4) and beat Maryland at home next week. After Ohio State, they finish at home against Penn State.

Dantonio's teams have won 21 of 27 November games since he became the Spartans' coach in 2007. They've won nine straight November conference road games and 10 of their last 11.

Saturday's game ends a tumultuous week for Nebraska. The Huskers lost 55-45 at Purdue last week, giving the Huskers their worst nine-game record since 1960. First-year coach Mike Riley received public votes of confidence from athletic director Shawn Eichorst and chancellor Harvey Perlman.

Riley said he was thankful for the support and that angst among fans is understandable because of how deeply they care. “We want to do better for everybody,” he said. “That's what we're going to do, I hope really soon, I hope Saturday. It makes me want to do better faster ... knowing that these great fans are out there wanting to win, that the people who work with you at the university are behind you in every way.”

Riley said he hasn't wavered in his belief that the Huskers are better than their record indicates.

“They've practiced well every week,” he said. “Maybe, just maybe, all the work they've done, maybe now one pays off.”

Some things to know as the Spartans go for their

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South Dakota running back Michael Fredrick, 14, gets wrapped up by the Northern Iowa defense during the Coyotes' 20-7 loss at UNI on Oct. 31. USD will look to bounce back from that setback and earn its first November victory since 2011 as it hosts Southern Illinois today (Saturday).

P&D FILE PHOTO

USD Looks For First November Win Since 2011

BY JEREMY HOECK

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VERMILLION – If a postseason berth is going to be a serious and realistic goal for the University of South Dakota football team, at least two wins in the final three games is likely a must.

Two wins would mean the Coyotes finish 4-4 in the Missouri Valley Football Conference. Three wins would mean an almost certain playoff invite.

Three losses would mean another frustrating end to a season for a USD program that hasn't won a game played in the month of November since 2011 – it is 0-11 since.

As such, there could be an understandable sense that these last three games are a group; that you have to win all of them at once. That can't be the focus, however, for today's (Saturday) home game with Southern Illinois, according to sophomore offensive lineman Ed Kennedy.

“Especially in the Missouri Valley, you literally have to take one at a time,” he said. “Every game is such

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rival South Dakota State and a road trip to Illinois State.

The energy the Coyotes brought in that upset victory in Fargo? Yeah, they'll need more of that over the next three Saturdays, Kennedy said.

“We'll have to play our best football over the next three weeks to make that happen,” he said.

The Coyotes will also need their defense to continue playing at the same high level.

Dating back to halftime of that win over North Dakota State, USD's defense has surrendered two touchdowns over the last 10 quarters of play – it allowed a pair of field goals after halftime a week ago.

While its offense is still only av-

a challenge, and there's no team you can look over.”

Particularly right now for USD (4-4, 2-3), which hosts Southern Illinois – for the first time – before a home date with

eraging 19 points in conference play (it averaged 16.3 a year ago), USD's defense has cut its output by two touchdowns a game.

After last season, there were no dramatic schematic changes for the defense, head coach Joe Glenn said this week. Sure, the Coyotes made the move to a 4-3 front, but they've relied on “technical defense.”

“I told him the best teams I've ever coached against were teams that did a little and did it well,” Glenn said, referring to defensive coordinator Jason Petrino.

“Now, if you're doing a little but not doing it well, you've got to mix in some things.”

The pressure being applied by the four-man front has also allowed the experience at linebacker and in the secondary to shine – the only player younger than a sophomore in the defensive two-deep is redshirt freshman end Andrew Van Ginkel (who has eight sacks).

“Teams aren't throwing over our heads as much. That used to be a regular occurrence,” Glenn said.

“Our pass rush has been better, and we've done most of it with our base defense.”

Now comes a significant test for that secondary.

Southern Illinois (3-5, 2-3) is led by senior quarterback Mark Iannotti, who ranks fourth nationally in passing yards (2351) and total offense per game (360.9). He guides a Salukis offense that averages 39 points a game.

“What we've seen on film is that he definitely likes to throw,” USD junior defensive end Colin Mertlik said. “He's their best player; one of the best players in the conference.”

“We'll have to stop him.” The Coyotes might need to, otherwise they could be forced into a position where their offense would need to double its average output.

“I don't really believe we can survive if they score 39 points,” Glenn said.

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P&D FILE PHOTO

Yankton's Treyson Slate was named first-team all-state in Class AA boys' soccer.

Soccer

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experience is a big deal for him.”

That experience, including playing on the Bucks' 2012 championship team, has helped develop Slate into a calm, focused key in the defense.

“At the center back, you have to be patient. You have to be under control,” Brenner said. “You have to direct the defense and see the field well. You have to know when to transition from defense to offense.”

Slate, who was one of the Bucks' captains this season, filled that bill.

“Not only is Treyson a great athlete, he had time to mature into a calm, patient leader,” Brenner said. “And we get one more year of him. Next year he will be one of the players capable of leading this team to another level.”

Huber finished third on the team with four goals on the season, tops

among midfielders for the Bucks. He also had an assist.

“Chase has very good ball control. He's also very focused on the game overall,” Brenner said of the center midfielder. “He has developed into a very solid offensive player.”

Wenzlaff, a forward, tied for team lead in both goals (9) and assists (2). The junior doesn't fit the mold of the typical forward, Brenner said.

“He's a great leader. He stays very patient,” Brenner said. “He's a surprise player – everyone forgets about him until he starts scoring. He's not flashy – he gets the ball and gets the job done.”

The Bucks (6-7-1, 3-5 ESD) graduate three players from a team that advanced to the Class AA quarterfinals. They will return 11 players who earned a varsity letter this season.

Class A

The Vermillion Tanagers had one honoree, senior defender Alex Leber, on the first team.

Leber was a four-year starter for Vermillion, beginning his career as a member of the Tanagers' 2012 state championship team.

“He played almost every minute of his high school career,” said Vermillion head coach Curt Nelson. “For the last couple of years, he's been at the center of our defense. He's a guy that cleans up everything that gets to him, and he's done well in grooming some of our younger defenders.”

Besides being a leader on and off the field, Leber has been an explosive athlete for the Tanagers.

“He's a guy that wins every header that comes in the middle of the defense,” Nelson said. “He's got great speed to close out opponents. Every day at practice he is pushing people to be their best.”

Freeman Academy had three honorees, all on second team: senior midfielder Ryan Haggerty, sophomore forward Dalton Bodewitz and sophomore midfielder Brennan Haggerty.

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