

Hoeck: Meet Sly Wagner, One Of The Biggest Bucks Fans



Slyvester 'Sly' Wagner stands on the field after the Class 11AA championship game on Friday at the DakotaDome in Vermillion.

BY JEREMY HOECK
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A year ago, Sylvester Wagner wasn't able to celebrate on the DakotaDome turf with his Yankton High School classmates after a state football championship.

He hoped he would get that chance this fall.

And sure enough, after the Bucks beat Pierre in an overtime thriller last Friday night, Wagner was one of the first students to rush the field. Wearing his red state football t-shirt, Wagner – a 15-year-old sophomore at YHS – made sure to shake hands with players and tell them congratulations.

The thing was, the players heard "nice game" from an automated voice.

You see, Wagner – whose friends call him "Sly" – has a speech defect. He communicates with a device called a Nova Chat 5, which you'd confuse with a cell phone (it's actually a Samsung), and it enables him to communicate through various phrases and



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would be bulky; that it would be something you'd have to lug around. But no, it's a cell-phone sized device on a strap Wagner wears around his shoulder.

You would also have no idea he needs the device to communicate until you ask him, like I did this week, what it was like to be in the front row of the YHS student section last Friday night.

"It was fun to be close to see everything," the automatic voice replies, after Wagner pushes the correct button – much like you and I would click on the Facebook icon on

our smartphones.

By all accounts, the device has helped Wagner open up to his classmates and teachers.

And it's also helped that Wagner has been spending more and more time with Amberlee Mueller, a paraprofessional in the YHS special education department. Mueller, a YHS and Mount Marty College graduate, isn't with Wagner all day, but it's clearly a connection that is helping him.

"He's really good with me, because I'm with him a lot," Mueller said this week, while sitting with Wagner. "We're trying to get him to use it more with other students, to introduce himself and meet new people."

To ensure that Wagner's communication with others is always improving, Mueller works – almost on a daily basis, she says – to input more replies, questions and other items. All of his teachers are also in the device, most with photos, as well as students in his classes.

For example, ask Wagner where he likes to eat and you'll hear "Yesterday's" (Yesterday's Café). Or ask him his class schedule, and you'll hear the name of the course, the name of the teacher and which room the class is held.

Yes, the device is set up to allow easier communication for Wagner, but it's also proving to be helpful for his teachers, Mueller said.

"For teachers, it's a lot easier," she said. "I try to work with them to say, if there is something they'd like me to put in there, to let me know."

Science class, for example, would be one of those classes where Mueller is constantly entering new terms – with the idea that Wagner would be able to participate during class.

Imagine participating without the ability to talk. Imagine the hundreds of short conversations you have throughout an average day. Now imagine doing that

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Missouri Valley Football

USD Going To 'Fight Like Heck' For Winning Season

BY JEREMY HOECK
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All is not lost for the University of South Dakota football team.

Head coach Joe Glenn was clear about that during Tuesday's Missouri Valley Football teleconference.

A win in Saturday's regular season finale at sixth-ranked Illinois State would ensure a winning record for the Coyotes (5-5, 3-4), who haven't finished a season above .500 since 2011.

What would that mean for USD?

"You walk a little taller for a year, you feel a little bit better about where you're going, what direction you're headed," Glenn said.

A week after their playoff hopes were all but dashed with a 30-23 home loss to rival South Dakota State, the Coyotes still have one final goal to play for. The program, in year four under Glenn, hadn't won a game in the month of November since that 2011 season, but the Coyotes now have a chance for two.

"We're going to salvage what we can," Glenn said. "We have a chance for a winning season, and we're going to fight like heck for it."

And yet, the playoff question returned.

An Illinois State reporter asked Glenn if he felt any potential 6-5 Valley team (Western Illinois, Youngstown State and USD all have a chance to finish with that record) could deserve an at-large invite to the FCS postseason.

It's not likely that the conference gets more than five bids, but all hope might not be lost, Glenn said.

"We'll see," he said. "We need a win, and I'm saying, what if we won? We'd have a win over North Dakota State and Illinois State."

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South Dakota quarterback Ryan Saeger, 2, hands off to running back Michael Fredrick during the Coyotes' matchup with South Dakota State on Saturday at the DakotaDome in Vermillion. USD needs a victory over No. 6 Illinois State to earn a winning season.

P&D FILE PHOTO

Panthers Shut Down

USD Women

CEDAR FALLS, Iowa – Northern Iowa seniors Jen Keitel and Amber Sorenson scored 15 and 14 points, respectively, to lead the Panthers to a 64-43 win against South Dakota in the McLeod Center on Tuesday night.

Northern Iowa improved to 2-0 on the season while South Dakota fell to 0-2.

South Dakota shot a mere 28.1 percent (16-for-57) from the field and finished 1-for-10 beyond the arc.

Although the Coyotes crashed the boards to out-rebound the Panthers 45-32, South Dakota had 19 turnovers to Northern Iowa's nine. UNI scored 22 points off of Coyote turnovers during the game.

After an early bucket by senior center Margaret McCloud, the Coyotes missed eight straight jumpers to help the Panthers on a 12-0 run. Northern Iowa would not trail again. Sophomore Kate Liveringhouse ended the Coyotes' five-minute scoring drought with a layup in the sixth minute of the game.

Keitel had eight of her game-high 15 points in the first quarter.

The Coyotes started the second quarter down 18-8. South Dakota matched Northern Iowa nearly bucket-for-bucket in the second quarter as Northern Iowa took the halftime lead 35-22.

In addition to Keitel and Sorenson, Northern Iowa's Madison Weekly reached double-digits with 11 points. Sorenson and Sharnae Lamar led the Panther rebounding effort with six boards apiece.

Liveringhouse led the Coyotes in scoring with 11 points. She also pulled down five rebounds.

Senior point guard Tia Hemiller, junior forward Bridget Arens, and McCloud each tallied six points a piece. McCloud added a team-high six rebounds with four offensive boards.

The 2015 Summit League

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French, English Soccer Teams Unite In Defiance, Respect

LONDON (AP) — Uniting in a symbol of defiance and respect, players and fans of the French and English soccer teams delivered a moving display of solidarity at Wembley Stadium at a friendly staged four days after the deadly attacks in Paris.

A touching pre-game ceremony saw England and France supporters sing the French national anthem as one, before the squads came together around the center circle to observe impeccably a minute's silence in honor of the 129 people killed.

Social media was awash with praise for the dignified way a sensitive occasion was handled, while French sports daily L'Equipe's Wednesday front page comprised a photo of the players observing the minute's silence with the single word "Respect."

Wembley's iconic arch was lit up in the blue, white, and red of the French flag, while the French motto "Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite" was projected on the front of the national stadium.

England won 2-0, but rarely has the result of a soccer match — particularly one this prestigious — felt so irrelevant.

"This will be shown round the world and will show unity," said England captain Wayne Rooney, one of the team's goal-scorers. "Football is a global game and it is not about religion or race. We need to stand tall together in these tough times."

France striker Olivier Giroud said it was an emotionally charged occasion, "illustrated by the minute's silence and 'La Marseillaise' (France's national anthem)."

"We wanted to play this match for all the people who have stayed in Paris, to pay homage and to honor the victims and their families," Giroud said. "Everyone who played the match is a professional player. Even if it wasn't easy, we had to do our job on the pitch."

Prince William, who helped lay floral tributes beside the field, and British Prime Minister David Cameron were among the 71,223 spectators at Wembley, where there was an increased police presence and enhanced security measures that included compulsory bag searches.

Mount Marty's Prouty Excited About NAIA Nationals Berth

BY BEN HEGGE
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For the first time, Mount Marty head cross country coach Randy Fischer is taking a freshman to the national cross-country meet, scheduled for this Saturday in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Mikayla Prouty, a freshman from Bryant, placed sixth (18:54) at the Great Plains Athletic Conference Championships, qualifying her for the National Championships.

"It is quite an accomplishment to qualify for the national meet," said Fischer. "It is especially rare for Mikayla, as she is only a freshman."

Prouty is not only one of the top freshmen to ever run at Mount Marty, but she is the best in the conference. Prouty was the only freshman from the GPAC to qualify, as all other qualifiers were juniors or seniors.

"I definitely have mixed emotions about running at nationals. I am nervous because I am so young and I will be running against 300 of the top runners in NAIA," said Prouty. "However, I am also looking forward to the challenge and feel honored to run against a tough field of competition."

Cross Country is not the only thing Prouty is involved with at Mount Marty. She is also a member of the women's basketball team.

"Being involved with the basketball team has really been a positive. It has given her another

conditioning style that has helped her running," said Fischer. "Mikayla is a very determined girl, and she has juggled the time commitment to both sports very well."

Attending practices for two sports that are in-season at the same time has been a difficult task for Prouty.

"It is definitely tough to balance time. I attend all basketball practices and as many cross country practices as possible," said Prouty. "The last month I backed off on cross-country mileage and ran shorter, faster paced miles."

With qualifying for nationals in cross-country and averaging six points a game for the basketball team, juggling two sports has not been an issue for Prouty.

Coach Fischer hopes that Prouty and the rest of the Lancers continue to build off the success from this season moving forward.

"Their hard work and dedication has translated into success this season," said Coach Fischer. "Qualifying a freshman for nationals is a big step in our program."

Prouty and Coach Fischer will fly out of Omaha on Thursday morning and head for Charlotte. The meet will take place on Saturday at McAlpine Creek Park.

"It will be a great experience," said Fischer. "All you can ask is to do your best and see what happens."

Follow @bigheadbenny13 on Twitter.



Mount Marty's Mikayla Prouty finishes 10th in the MMC Invitational last month. Prouty finished sixth in the Great Plains Athletic Conference Championships, earning a berth in the NAIA Cross Country Championships this Saturday in Charlotte, North Carolina.

P&D FILE PHOTO