

# Lancers Beat Presentation In Final Non-Conference Match

Mount Marty Begins Four-Match GPAC Stretch With Midland At Home Today

BY EMILY NIEBRUGGE  
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Head coach Candice Climer was glad to see her volleyball team end their seven game losing streak, but knows they will have to play better down the road.

The Mount Marty College Lancers faced the Presentation College Saints at Friday night's volleyball match at the Laddie E. Cimpr Arena going 3-0 against the Saints with scores 25-20, 18-25, 25-23, 25-18.

The Lancers found themselves trailing the Saints early in game one, with Presentation College leading 10-6. Mount Marty quickly caught up to tie the set 14-14. The Lancers hung on to their lead 21-20 against the Saints, and would claim set one 25-20.

A tight second set put the Lancers and the Saints at another tie, 9-9, until Presentation took the 15-11 lead. Presentation held on to their lead to defeat Mount Marty 25-18.

The Lancers came out on top early in set three 9-7 against the Saints, until Presentation tied the set 13-13. Mount Marty jumped ahead from a 22-22 tie later in the set to win 25-23.

The Lancers took advantage with their 12-9 lead in set four against the Saints to stay ahead and win 25-18 against the Saints, winning the match 3-0.

Climer said she wasn't pleased with the performance, because she knows the team will have to play better to face Midland today (Saturday.)

"It felt like we were doing all of the chasing tonight," she said. "I'm glad for the win, but I had to keep reminding them about their loss this weekend."

The Lancers lost four out of their nine game sets last weekend by two points each, after they were ahead for each match Climer said.

"Volleyball is a momentum game. I was trying to get them going and celebrating after every point, because that's what the other side was doing. Everybody has to be together to win," she said.

"By that third set I reminded them of how mad they were last weekend, and told them they needed to step down and take the win."

Mount Marty's Amanda Dirksen recorded 15 kills, 11 digs and three blocks for the night, and Lexie Branson had 11 kills and two

blocks. Kristen Boyle made 11 kills and one block, while Kate Lingsheit put up nine kills, five blocks and two aces. Caitlyn Illg also contributed 39 assists and eight digs.

For Presentation, Karly Fuhrman had 11 kills, three blocks and one ace, Megan Goedert made nine kills, two blocks and one ace and Kendra Ostrom put up seven kills. Carly Peterson made 16 assists and Tina Boldt contributed 17 digs.

Boyle said she and her teammates knew they could win, and came together throughout the game to do so.

"We came out kind of slow, but we came out strong at the end. Everybody put in a good effort to win," she said. "Every game we have to come out ready to go and do our best no matter who we're playing. We just knew we had to get ourselves pumped up and just play."

The Lancers will face Midland at home today (Saturday) in Great Plains Athletic Conference volleyball action, and Climer said the team has nothing to lose.

"They know they have to step up for this

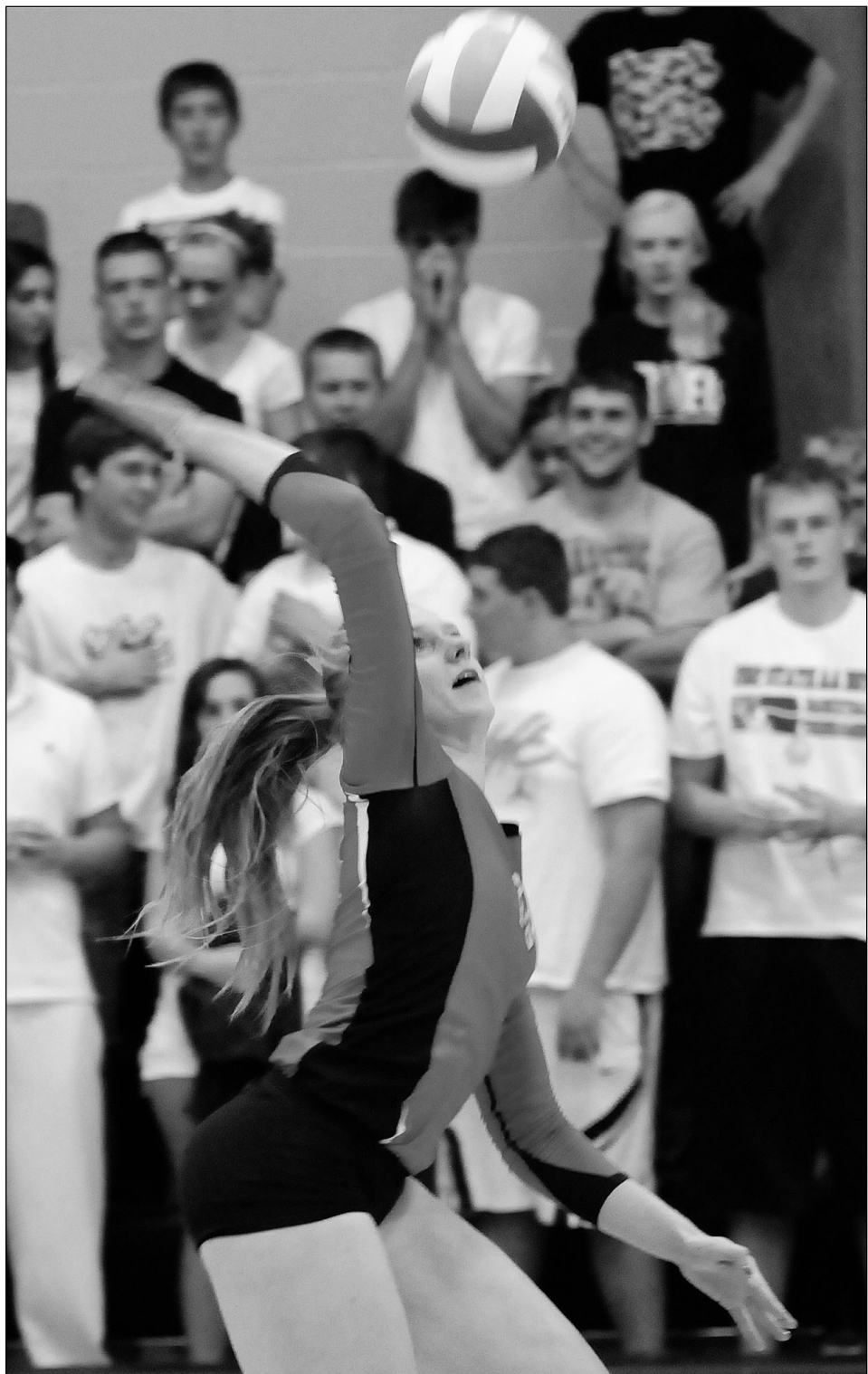
LANCERS | PAGE 13



JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

**Mount Marty libero Rosie Esparza passes the ball during the Lancers' home match with Presentation on Friday at Laddie E. Cimpr Arena. MMC won 3-1 to end a seven-match losing streak.**

## BIG RED FIREPOWER



Yankton seniors Kelsey Fitzgerald, left, and Mikala Hora, right, have provided a 1-2 punch up front that few teams can match. Hora ranks second in Class AA in kills (313), trailing only Mitchell's Taylin Alm by three. Fitzgerald ranks third in the state with 244 kills on the season. Hora is Yankton's all-time leader in kills (1,226), and ranks in the top-10 in YHS history in digs (671) and ace serves (88). Fitzgerald ranks fifth in kills (706) and fourth in blocks (160).



P&D FILE PHOTOS

# Senior Duo Controls Net For YHS

Hora, Fitzgerald Rank Among State's Best, Yankton's All-Time Leaders

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Mikala Hora's 'welcome to varsity volleyball moment' in the fall of 2009 was a painful one.

During a match at Sioux Falls Lincoln, Hora — then a freshman starter — took a spike from former Lincoln standout Erin Radke right to the face.

"I was on the court tearing up, and McKenzie Fitzgerald (former YHS player) came over and said, 'Do not show her that you're about to cry,'" Hora said following a practice this week. "That's what scared the most; those were some good girls.

"I remember thinking, 'Holy cow, I have to step my game up a little bit here.'"

In short fashion, the 5-foot-10 senior did exactly that, quickly developing into one of the state's top all-time hitters. The thing about Hora, though, is that she will forever be inextricably linked together with Kelsey Fitzgerald in the volleyball record books at Yankton High School.

The two seniors, both four-year starters, are not only the leaders of a young Gazelles team this fall, but are among the top offensive threats in the state. Their main focus, though? Getting Yankton to the state volleyball tournament for the first time since 2007.

The tandem has combined for 87 percent of Yankton's total kills this season and each rank in the top three in Class AA for total kills. Mitchell's Taylin Alm leads with 316, followed by Hora (313) and Fitzgerald (244).

"We both know we have the most experience, so we have to take charge," Fitzgerald said.

ald said. "We have to help our teammates too. We know we shouldn't get down because it brings them down, but they're a great group."

Playing alongside four years worth of changing teammates, Hora and Fitzgerald have progressed in different ways. Though they each said court vision has played a key role in their statistics, they have tackled different responsibilities.

Hora has become a weapon on serves, while Fitzgerald has steadily improved her standing as a blocking force.

"You look at some of the better hitters at our level, and they're only hitters," Yankton head coach Leasa Woodward said. "To see both of those kids play the back row like they are right now is something special."

The proof is found in the YHS record books. Hora ranks first all-time in career kills (1,226) — the only Gazelle to ever crack 1,000 — and ranks eighth in career digs (671) and ace serves (88). Fitzgerald ranks fifth in kills (706) and fourth in total blocks (160).

Posting numbers like those naturally took time and maturity, Fitzgerald said, pointing to her freshman year as "nerve-racking."

"I always hit it way out of bounds, but having my sister there always pushing me to do better really helped me," she said. "I was nervous, too, but you have great people there for you, even when you do bad."

There haven't been many moments like that for either player. Hora, in particular, has earned first team All-State recognition each of the past two years, and is a candi-

date for a third straight honor this season despite moving to the middle.

"You just knew from the time she was in middle school that she was a tremendous athlete," Woodward said. "The fact that she fell in love with the sport right away was a definite bonus for our program."

Like Fitzgerald, Hora is a three-sport athlete at Yankton. She is also a standout basketball player and competes in track during the spring, but it's been in volleyball where her biggest impact has been felt state-wide.

"She has such natural ability and has improved her skills tremendously as a player and as a leader," Mitchell volleyball coach Deb Thill said. "No team can really stop her, she has the capability of hitting from any position to anywhere on the court."

As she entered her senior season, Hora's production was going to naturally increase, given that the Gazelles returned only four players with varsity experience — Fitzgerald, Kelsey Butler (Sr.) and Brooke Wuebben (Jr.).

Having a fellow senior with her has helped bridge any early obstacles, Hora said, though she later pointed out that team chemistry is much improved from a year ago.

"I personally get down on myself a lot, but having Kelsey around to pump me up helps," Hora said. "She knows what I'm going through, and I know what's she going through."

What they've both gone through is also post-season frustration.

Yankton has come up short of the State

AA Tournament each of the three years in their career, despite last year's team going 16-5. The Gazelles last competed at the state tournament in 2007, when they finished seventh.

"When we lost last year, knowing we were graduating a group that had a huge impact but never got to the state tournament, it really stung," Woodward said. "I know that's something these two would say, that they have one last chance to get there."

The Gazelles, at 7-11 this season, begin District 2AA action next Thursday at home against Brandon Valley, at 7 p.m. Yankton could still get to state if they lost that opener, but the Gazelles would prefer not to start that way.

"We have people who want it, and they'll work hard for it. I think we have a chance," Fitzgerald said. "We could be that team to sneak in there."

When it comes to the future for Hora and Fitzgerald, beyond a possible state tournament berth, their paths appear headed for different directions.

Hora is committed to play Division I volleyball at South Dakota State (she will officially sign next month), while Fitzgerald is undecided but said she is leaning toward college basketball.

"Knowing where I'm going and being so excited to get there makes this year so much more relaxing," Hora said. "It hasn't really hit me that I'm almost done with high school. We want to enjoy every last minute of it."

You can follow Jeremy Hoeck on Twitter at [twitter.com/jhoeck](https://twitter.com/jhoeck)

## 'Yotes Look To Put Beating From Bison Behind Them

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VERMILLION — If it sounds like the same forecast, it's because it is: The University of South Dakota football team hits the road while looking to end some struggles.

The Coyotes (1-6, 0-4), mired in the program's first 5-game losing streak since 2001, are in Terre Haute, Ind. today (Saturday) for a 1:05 p.m. matchup with No. 15-ranked Indiana State.

In the sense that USD is trying to forget about last weekend's 54-0 thrashing by North Dakota State, any kind of 'next' game — on the road, at home, wherever — is a welcome change.

"Losses like that will happen.

The only way you get better is move on and keep fighting," junior safety Devin Taverna said. "You can't go back and change things; you can't stop them from scoring, it's all about preparing for Indiana State."

Today's matchup, with that in mind, is a tale of two teams going in opposite directions.

The Sycamores (6-2, 4-1), tied for first place in the Missouri Valley Football Conference, have won four straight games and have allowed just three offensive touchdowns in that streak. Included in that span is an Oct. 13 upset at then top-ranked North Dakota State.

"Anybody that can hold down North Dakota State like that, you know they're playing good defense," USD head coach Joe Glenn said this week after a practice.

Indiana State boasts the nation's second-best scoring defense (12.38 ppg) and ranks fifth overall in total offense (289.88 yards per game). The Sycamores will start five seniors in their 4-3 defensive scheme, which has recorded 41 tackles for loss and 14 sacks.

In the words of USD junior running back Jasper Sanders, "They're pretty good, they beat Illinois State. They're very capable, no doubt."

The Sycamores also have the nation's fifth-leading rusher in junior Shakir Bell (1,156 yds, 9 TD), last year's conference offensive Player of the Year. The Coyote coaching staff has referenced this week Bell's strong legs as a focal point, despite his 5-foot-8 frame.

Taverna agreed, using a strong comparison to a former NFL standout.

"Our defensive coordinator (Jason Petrino) compared him to Barry Sanders," Taverna said. "He's so small, but his legs are powerful and he's shifty. It'll take a gang tackle to bring him down, not one guy."

With a weapon like that, Indiana State is naturally a run-dominated offense. The Sycamores average 41 carries and 23 passes a game — with quarterback Mike Perish (1,097 yds, 7 TD, 5 INT).

No matter where it comes, on the ground or through the air, the Coyotes are simply looking to get better as a whole on defense. USD ranks 82nd nationally, among 121 FCS teams, in total defense.

"We have some great athletes, but defense has to come out stronger and more mentally focused," Taverna said. "We're so hungry for that win and ready to prove how good we can actually be."

The Coyotes have lost 12 consecutive road games and 13

COYOTES | PAGE 13