

# Crofton Girls Win Ninth Straight Title

## Cross Country: Crofton Boys Finish Fourth In D

From P&D Staff Reports

KEARNEY, Neb. — The Crofton girls' cross country team matched the longest win streak in Nebraska state history with a ninth consecutive title, as the Lady Warriors beat out Oakland-Craig and the rest of the Class D field on Friday in Kearney, Nebraska.

Crofton finished at 23 points, followed by Oakland-Craig (45), Malcolm (72) and Norfolk Catholic (81). The Lady Warriors matched the Lincoln Southeast girls (1989-97) as the only other program in state history to win nine straight titles.

"It is really bittersweet," said Crofton assistant coach Jason Arens. "We had seven seniors, so we're losing a lot of character. But this is something that they really wanted. It's a great feather in their caps."

Crofton was led by freshman Haley Arens (20:04.0), who placed second to Gordon-Rushville senior Sheridan Wellnitz (19:37.9) in the race.

"Haley did a good job of keeping her composure," Coach Arens said. "She started out well, but when the Gordon-Rushville girl made her move at about the mile-and-a-half or the two-mile mark, it spooked her a little. She recovered and held on to second."

Haley Arens was the only freshman to place in the top 15 of the Class D girls' race. Seniors Quinn Wragge (8th, 20:30.2) and Kendy Kube (15th, 21:12.8) also took home medals. Senior Vanessa McFarland placed 20th (21:36.7), ahead of all but one of the second runners for other qualified teams.

"Quinn started out in 20th and moved up for a great finish," Coach Arens said. "Kendy

was probably 75 meters out of a place, but once we pegged it, her eyes lit up. Vanessa put her head up and competed."

Also for the Lady Warriors, Krista Zavadil finished in 33rd (22:08.7) while Kyla Dendinger (22:30.6) placed 41st.

"It was a hard day for Krista, and Kyla is coming off sickness," Coach Arens said. "They both competed well."

Also in the Class D girls' race, Laurel-Corcord-Coleridge senior Sadie Petersen just missed the awards stand, placing 18th in 21:20.0. Bloomfield's Clair Trenhaile finished 57th in 23:11.2.

Nebraska Christian beat out Ainsworth 29-42 for the Class D boys' title, with Yutan (79) and Crofton (93) finishing third and fourth.

"The teams ran to their potential," Coach Arens said, referring to the top teams finishing

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JEREMY HOECK/P&D  
South Dakota's Danielle Anderson, right, jumps to head the ball in front of South Dakota State defender Dani Patterson during their Summit League game Friday in Vermillion.

# Kickers A Key For YHS

## Bucks Have Had Strong Legs In The Past Decade, Even Longer

BY NICK ROBINSON  
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Since 2001, the Yankton Bucks football team has been blessed with some great legs. From college kickers, to pro baseball players, and another one with a future undecided, it's easy to say Yankton has had some of the best kickers in the state since the turn of the millennium.

It started with Frank Leibfarth (a converted soccer player), then carried on to Layne Somsen (eventually a pro baseball player), then to Lane Sawatzke (a college player) and now to senior Brady Hale.

"I started kicking as a freshman in PE class with Coach (Arlin) Likness," Leibfarth said. "He put a tee down and had all of us kick it and after I went up he asked me to play. I hadn't played before but thought it could be something I was interested in."

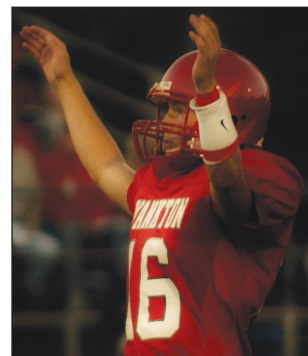
After pondering the invitation, it was something Leibfarth felt he could be good at, with some practice.

"After that, I was willing to practice and put the effort in," he said. "I really put it to heart and told them I would do it. I went to a kicking camp in Sioux Falls and got some work in with Adam Vinatieri." Leibfarth had his strug-

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P&D FILE PHOTOS  
Yankton senior Brady Hale (above) kicks off during the Bucks' trip to Aberdeen earlier this season. Hale is the latest in a long line of quality place-kickers for the Bucks, including Frank Leibfarth (left), Layne Somsen (center) and Lane Sawatzke.



# First-Place Jacks Stop South Dakota

BY JEREMY HOECK  
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VERMILLION — As the University of South Dakota was honoring its 11 seniors, South Dakota State was looking to maintain its hold on first place in the Summit League.

Their two paths crossed Friday in Vermillion, but it was the first-place Jackrabbits who got the better of their rivals 3-1.

Playing a game that was already going to have extra energy on top of it being Senior Day proved challenging for the Coyotes (8-6-2, 1-2-2).

"It's tough to have a senior game against a team like South Dakota State, because there's a lot of emotion," head coach Mandy Green said. "They obviously capitalized on a couple mistakes we made, and they got us while we were down."

After two losses in a row, the Jackrabbits (8-7-1, 4-2-1) still felt like they couldn't afford a loss Friday, head coach Lang Wedemeyer said.

"This was a must-win situation for us, to keep our playoffs hope alive," he said.

Meanwhile, the Coyotes — who fall to seventh in the standings, with the top four making the post-season tournament — were trying to have a solid performance in front of family and friends.

"It's been a lead-up all week, but after that game and a loss like that, it hurts a little bit more," said senior defender Sam Harvey. "It definitely hits you at the end."

The Coyotes, though, were hit early on. The Jacks got a goal from Nicole Hatcher in the 14th minute and another from Alyssa Brazil in the 18th minute.

"We definitely didn't put our heads down after that," Harvey said. "We still believed in ourselves; knew that we were still in this."

South Dakota State's second goal came on a miscommunication in the goalie box, and suddenly the Coyotes were down 2-0.

"This is where we have learned the hard way," Green said. "When we make mistakes a good team, they capitalize."

"We still don't handle adversity the way we should."

The Coyotes were held scoreless for 70 minutes before junior Danielle Anderson scored on a deflection from a corner kick midway through the second half.

The home team had found the spark it was looking for.

"You could see everyone's head pick up," Harvey said. "We switched things up a little bit, but SDSU played it perfectly."

"That's what any good team does." From that point, the Jackrabbits held off the USD surge and held on for the victory — their fourth in four Division I meetings.

South Dakota, though, has proven to be an improved team, Wedemeyer said.

"There's more maturity to their game as they've had a full class come through," he said. "We knew it'd be a tough game."

With three games remaining in the regular season, the 11 USD seniors have a chance to add on to what is already the most successful D-I season. Those seniors won one game their first season in Vermillion.

"We've had a lot of mindset changes, you can see the difference in the way we prepare for games," Harvey said. "It's a complete 180 from freshman year."

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# Yankton Runners Compete At State Today



P&D FILE PHOTO  
Savannah Woods, front, and Lauren Graves will be among the leaders for Yankton when the Gazelles compete in the state cross country meet today (Saturday) in Huron.

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK  
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A runner-up finish in the Eastern South Dakota Conference Championships and a strong showing at last week's tune-up meet at Brandon Valley has the Yankton girls looking more like a team that will return to the awards stand at this year's South Dakota State Cross Country meet, set for today (Saturday) in Huron.

"After our performance last Saturday at ESD and how we ran at Brandon on Thursday, I'd say we've taken a big step of improvement," said Yankton head coach Dave Dannenbring. "We're at the point in our training where I think we can run our best."

At ESD, junior Savannah Woods, freshman Madison McClure and senior Lauren Graves finished 1-2-4. Woods was the 2012 state champion, and McClure has won a few races this season as well.

"By having 1-2, and potentially 1-2-3 at the front, it gives us a lot of leeway with our fourth and fifth runners," Dannenbring said. "Our 4-5-6-7 runners have taken a big jump

and moved up to the front of the pack."

"I'm excited for those girls. If they run to their abilities, good things could happen."

Yankton finished third a year ago, but graduated state champion Annie Kruse. Woods, who won in 2012, finished third, with Madison McClure 25th. Graves finished 47th, with Tessa Folkers 53rd.

While Graves has typically been Yankton's third runner, Dannenbring said the senior is also the team's fastest over shorter distances.

"Lauren's got a lot of speed," he said. "She's started to put it together in 2.5-mile races. She's probably got the most speed of anybody on the team."

Senior Erica Westerman, freshman Folkers and seventh graders Lauren Eidsness and Emerson McClure round out the Gazelles' seven runners for state.

"Lauren and Emerson, for seventh graders, are very mature. They race with a lot of confidence," Dannenbring said. "The first couple

# Yankton Heads To State Competitive Cheer & Dance Today

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK  
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Yankton will compete in the 2014 South Dakota Class AA Competitive Cheer and Dance Championships, set for today (Saturday) in Watertown.

The event kicks off at 11:05 a.m., with Yankton's cheer team taking the floor at 1:19 p.m., the final competitors before the break. Yankton's dance squad takes the floor three times, at 12:23 p.m. for jazz, 2:25 p.m. for kick and 3:21 p.m. for pom. Awards are scheduled for approximately 4 p.m.

Here is a look at the Gazelles squads competing today.

## Cheer

With half the opening roster being first-year competitors, the Yankton cheer squad needed a boost. They

found it in the form of a little alumni assistance.

"A really good thing this summer was that the girls got to work in open gyms with (2014 alumnus) Jessica Popovich," said Yankton coach Kerry Svatos. "Some of the small things that we usually have to teach during the first few weeks were already done."

That allowed Svatos to focus on everything else, and the team thrived because of it.

"From where they started to where they are now is quite phenomenal," she said.

Seniors Kendyll Albrecht, Shannon Cwach, Bailey Franzen, Shelby Kleinschmit, Jessica Kotschegarow, Lindsay Larson and Kelsey Rokahr also played a key role in getting the team ready.

"I have great seniors. Some of them have been with us for four years," Svatos said. "It's a pretty outstanding

level of leadership that they provide."

The roster also features juniors, Laurel Friedenbach and Alyssa Sealey, sophomores Britney Bradwisch, Cami Friedenbach, Kaitlin Guthmiller, Nikole Knox, Kennedy Kolbi, Merlye Mason, Rose Ruffinott, Allurah Sasse, Karly Schaa, Emma Stewart and Kaitlin Weiner, and freshmen Kristlyn Albrecht and Kendall Megard.

While the Gazelles have continued to improve throughout the season, confidence will be key when the team takes the floor today.

"The biggest thing we've battled is making sure that everyone goes out feeling like they can complete the routine effortlessly and flawlessly," Svatos said. "I look for them to come in with a clear head and show others what they are capable of. I think they will give a performance that they can be proud of."

## Dance

The Gazelles dance team has not lived up to the success the program tasted in earlier seasons, but coach Tiffany Mueller is confident the young squad has a lot of great things ahead of them.

"We have a really young team and lost four seniors from last year," she said. "We have two brand-new seniors, a junior, and the rest are underclassmen."

Jessica Kotschegarow, who is also on the cheer team, and Morgyn Jaquith represent the senior class, while Payton Pierce is the lone junior. Also on the squad are sophomores Cheree Becvar, Belle Heine, Samantha Kanaly and Abbie Rehurek, and freshmen Savannah Frick, Taylor Kotschegarow, Emily Novak, Maddie Smith and Leah Waid.

"They are a talented group,"

Mueller said. "It's been fun to watch them progress and get better."

The kick and pom routines have been strong for the Gazelles this season. Yankton also competes in the jazz division. While Yankton has shined in all three at times, precision will be a key to having any of them show well at state.

"We need to get our turns sharp and our leaps where they need to be," Mueller said. "We've been focusing on that all week."

No matter where the team finishes, Mueller will be proud of the growth of her young team this season.

"They've grown so much," she said. "I want them to have fun, enjoy the experience."

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