

Hall Of Famer Koupal Excited To Be Back Home

Former USD, Colorado State Assistant Returns To Teach, Coach In Wagner

BY JEREMY HOECK
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VERMILLION — Whether it was up in Watertown or out in Colorado, Mandy Koupal always seemed to find her way back to her alma mater.

Koupal, a Wagner native, was inducted last Saturday into the Henry Heider Sports Hall of Fame at the University of South Dakota, where she was one of the most decorated women's basketball players in school history.

The Coyote all-time scoring leader was most recently on the

women's basketball staff at Colorado State University, along with two coaches also with ties to USD — CSU head coach Ryan Williams and Chad Lavin (also a former Coyote head coach).

Sure, they were all busy with their own team, but they never stopped checking in on USD, Koupal joked Saturday.

"We were following closely out in Colorado," she said with a smile following a halftime ceremony during USD's football game against Northern Arizona.

"I'm excited this year to hopefully catch some games, and come

support the Yotes and these girls."

Koupal, a two-time Division II Player of the Year and three-time All-American, scored 2,142 points in just three seasons (2000-04) at USD.

While it was no surprise that she was inducted into USD's nearly 300-person Hall of Fame, Koupal said she struggled to say exactly how she felt about the honor.

"Everyone asked me about my speech, and I didn't feel like I could come up with words that could explain the feeling," she said.

"You dream about something like this when you're a kid, so it's a very special feeling."

After graduation from USD, Koupal spent the next four years teaching fourth grade in Watertown. She then returned to Vermillion to complete a Master's degree in 2010, and was on the Coyote women's basketball staff for three seasons.

Koupal then followed Williams to Colorado State University, where she spent two seasons. Last season, the Rams won 25 games and reached the WNIT.

Ultimately, Koupal decided to leave Fort Collins and return to her hometown of Wagner.

"I missed my family; that's really important to me," she said. "We're

really close. I didn't get to see them enough.

"But I guess you couldn't take the South Dakota out of me."

Back in Wagner, Koupal is teaching fifth and sixth grade, and will also coach fifth and sixth grade girls' basketball. She will also help her brother Michael coach the Wagner varsity girls' basketball team.

And once again, Mandy Koupal found herself back on the USD campus Saturday.

"You always get the same welcome," she said. "And that's what's cool about USD. It really is a family."

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

Former Coyote Helping 3-0 Bucks



Yankton assistant coach Marc Murtha, right, talks to Bucks linemen on the sideline during Yankton's home-opening victory over Rapid City Stevens. The volunteer assistant has been a valuable asset for the Bucks, who take a 3-0 record into Friday's game at Sioux Falls O'Gorman. Start time for that contest is 5 p.m.

P&D FILE PHOTO

Murtha Makes Impact For YHS

BY NICK ROBINSON
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Marc Murtha, a former University of South Dakota offensive lineman had a bright future that had National Football League potentially written all over it.

After two season-ending leg injuries, Murtha decided to turn his focus away from playing the game. He wanted to share what he has learned from his five years as a Coyote.

"Ever since I can remember, I have always enjoyed helping others," Murtha said. "I've always been around sports and loved the team-mate aspect of it. I really enjoy being in public and meeting new people."

Murtha graduated with a criminal justice major along with minors in addiction studies and education last spring. He found an internship at the Yankton County Sheriff's Office and was able to earn a job this summer as a full-time corrections officer.

"I studied criminal justice at the University of South Dakota," Murtha said. "I did my internship here in Yankton and there was a job opening, so I moved my wife and young child here. I knew that I wanted to get into coaching after school. I called Arlin (Likness) and asked if there was anyway I could help coach, whether it was volunteering or not, I wanted to help the kids of the community get better on the field and off of it."

This was a no-brainer for Likness and the Yankton Bucks football staff.

"It was very promising when we got him on staff," he said. "He is very energetic and down to earth. Knowing his past, that other than his knee injuries, he had a good shot at the pro's. His dad played in the pro's, I remember his dad playing for the Minnesota Vikings in the Herschel Walker trade. I knew it wouldn't hurt us and with his great attitude it has done nothing but wonder's for our team."

Even though he is a season removed, Murtha admits it's been tough to follow his alma mater. But, he does as much as he can.

"I try to keep up with the team as much as I can," he said. "It's tough with a busy wife and a young child. We had some tough years, but I am happy to see them start to turn the corner. But, I do keep up with some linemen and I have been giving some advice

"Murtha has helped us become a close unit. Last year, we weren't nearly as close as we are now. We, as offensive linemen, are like brothers and have put a lot of time in."

NICK LAFAVE, YHS SENIOR LINEMAN

to a lineman who is getting scouted. I just try to tell him to keep focused and not let it get to his head, because I let it get to mine when I was in his shoes."

Looking back on his time as a Coyote, Murtha has used the grind of five years of collegiate football to his advantage.

"Looking back I really learned discipline and what it takes to play at that kind of level," he said. "It's tough to explain, but it takes a lot of dedication and hard work to be able to keep with it. It's something that has helped me with my everyday life."

Discipline is a staple that Murtha hopes to share with his players.

"I would like to think that I have carried over the discipline and being a team player over from my years at South Dakota to now. Being dedicated means whenever you need to do something, whether it's practice, a game, or film, to give it all you have and stay by your team."

Senior offensive lineman Nick LaFave feels the addition of Murtha has brought new life to the program.

"Murtha really brought some new life to this team. He taught us the things he learned at USD and new techniques," he said. "It is definitely paying off right now for us. He is a great coach and has a lot of experience under his belt and should be playing on Sunday's right now. I love having him around and being a coach here."

One thing Murtha has expressed, is that he wants to be able to help his players on and off the field.

"I feel like I want to be able to teach them things that will help them on the field and off of it," he said. "In football, you can learn so many life skills that can help you in the future, and I just want to be able to be a positive role model for these kids. I want to always be there for them, not matter what the circumstance is."

"I want to be a positive in kids' lives. I see juvenile's in and out all the time where I work. One decision can change a life completely and if

I can be there for guidance, I'd love to help them."

LaFave added that Murtha is always making sure the players are making the right decisions, but knows it's in the best intentions.

"He's a really nice guy and wants the best for us," he said. "He's a police officer, so he wants us to make sure we are making the right decisions for ourselves and the team. He really stresses the film study. It's nice to know we have a guy like that looking out for us."

The Maple Grove, Minnesota native has been focusing on the offensive line this fall.

"He is very into the offensive line," Likness said. "That is a big plus for us, he's able to share the little things he has learned throughout the years. It frees up a coach to work on some other things. So, we have given him full reigns on the offensive line. It makes things run a lot smoother."

Murtha has helped strengthen the team unity this fall.

"He's been a huge advantage for our team," LaFave said. "Murtha has helped us become a close unit. Last year, we weren't nearly as close as we are now. We, as offensive linemen, are like brothers and have put a lot of time in."

He's instilled that the student comes first before the athlete.

"I want these kids to know that they're here to get an education," Murtha said. "The sports come second."

Murtha loves the enthusiasm of the Yankton community and the support they show for Buck football.

"It's crazy how many people care here," he said. "I come from a town of about 50,000 people and it seems like everyone here cares about the football team and comes to the games on Fridays. After my first game, I had parents and people of the community come down and talk to me. I get to see these kids everyday and I know how much the community cares."

Murtha loves the growth

the team has made from the beginning of the season, but knows there is more work to do.

"I would like to see them be able to finish," he said. "There are so many things to work on, but in practice and even games, to be able to have that fire and passion throughout. Instead, of just in spurts. We want to get better every time we step on the football field."

LaFave knows something he will take from this season is accountability.

"Accountability is a big thing he focuses on," he said. "I know that's something I will take from him coaching me. When challenges come, we need everyone to come together to fix the problem, whether that's in football or real life."

The two-time Missouri Valley Conference Academic Excellence Award winner would love to stay in Yankton and continue to raise his family.

"I plan on staying here a long time," Murtha said. "We love it here and it's something where my heart is at. I love the game and I want to pass down what I have learned to kids."

Likness would like that too, but knows with coaching, comes uncertainty.

"Time will tell, that would be great to see, because I know he plans on being here for a while," he said. "But that's all about coaching, you take what you can get. But it's nice to have him here and it's been very smooth for the coaches and the players."

For his future, Murtha would like to continue to serve the community.

"I'd like to be a law enforcement officer," he said. "Teaching has always been something that has interested me, too, along with being a human resource officer at a school."

He and his wife Misty, along with their son Liam, are looking forward to their future in Yankton and what it has to offer.

"I'm really looking forward to see what the community has to offer and what I can offer the community," Murtha said. "I want to be a role model for my son and these kids."

You can follow Nick Robinson on Twitter at twitter.com/RobinsonNick2013. Discuss this story at yankton.net.

USD Blanks Drake 1-0

DES MOINES, Iowa—Sophomore Corey Strang scored the game-winning goal to lead South Dakota to a 1-0 win over Drake on Wednesday at Cownie Stadium in Des Moines.

Junior Elena Tsakakis threaded a pass through the defense in the 20th minute, leaving Strang in a 1-on-1 situation with Bulldog goalkeeper Kylynn Moyer. Strang beat the keeper and sent the ball to the corner of the net for her third goal of the season.

Moyer had five saves for the Bulldogs (5-6-0), four coming in the second half as the Coyotes attempted to extend their lead. In goal for the Coyotes, junior Mackenzie Viktor and freshman Sydney Hardin each recorded a save.

The win moves the Coyotes to 7-4-0 at the conclusion of non-conference play. South Dakota will take this weekend off and return home October 3 to take on Omaha at 4 p.m. at the USD Soccer Complex.

Sioux Falls
SIUUX CITY, Iowa — Briar Cliff held off Mount Marty 25-13, 25-7, 24-26, 25-21 in Great Plains Athletic Conference volleyball action on Wednesday in Sioux City, Iowa.

For Briar Cliff (11-4, 2-2 GPAC), Rachel Harrill had 14 kills and Breanna Nogelmeier had 11 kills and five assisted blocks to lead the way. Katelyn Langel had 10 kills, 12 digs and five assisted blocks. Dani Helland had 42 assists and 14 digs. Amy Frank had 18 digs in the win.

For Mount Marty, Allison Cross had 11 kills and five assisted blocks to lead the net attack. Sierra Kloth had eight kills. Laura Groseth posted four assisted blocks. Amber Dythse finished with 25 assists and 14 digs. BreAnne Thege added 17 digs for the Lancers.

Mount Marty (5-9, 0-3 GPAC) returns home to host Grace University in a non-conference match on Friday. Start time is 7:30 p.m. at Laddie E. Cimpl Arena.

NIORARA-VERDIGRE	24-26	19-25	25-15	25-23	25-23
WEST HOLT (4-8)	.....	26	15	25	23
WEST HOLT (4-8)	.....	24	19	25	25

Winside 3, Wausa 0

WINSIDE, Neb. — Winside swept Wausa 25-12, 25-12, 25-13 in Lewis & Clark Conference volleyball action on Tuesday.

No statistics were reported for Winside, 8-8 and winners of four straight. The Wildcats host Scribner-Snyder on Sept. 30.

Tori Clausen had five kills, four blocks and six digs to lead Wausa. Claire Wiegert had seven digs for the Vikings.

Wausa hosts Creighton today (Thursday) in Lewis & Clark action.

WAUSA (8-8)	.....	12	12	13
WINSIDE (8-8)	.....	25	25	25

Baltic 3, Irene-Wakonda 0

WAKONDA — Baltic swept Irene-Wakonda 25-14, 25-20, 25-18 in prep volleyball action on Tuesday.

For Baltic, Maddie Polzin and Rachel Aberson each had six kills, with Aberson also recording two blocks. Molly Sittig had 14 assists. Taylor Reiniller had five ace serves and Kenzie Moe had three ace serves in the victory.

Caillin Hinsteth led Irene-Wakonda with seven kills and three ace serves. Mikayla Heings had seven assists and two ace serves. Maria Van Driel added six digs.

Baltic hosts Parker and Irene-Wakonda travels to Avon today (Thursday).

BALTIC (5-6)	.....	25	25	25
IRENE-WAKONDA (1-8)	.....	14	20	18

Crofton 3, LCC 0

LAUREL, Neb. — Crofton continued its winning ways with a sweep over Laurel-Concord-Corlender on Tuesday in Nebraska prep volleyball action. The scores were 25-13, 25-13, 25-13.

Maria Wortmann led Crofton (10-0) with 18 kills, five digs, two blocks, and two ace serves. Monica Arens added seven kills and four ace serves, while Alison Arens added five kills and five digs.

Kaci Groen had eight kills and Katelyn Cook had 17 assists and two ace serves for LCC.

Crofton will host a triangular on Thursday, while LCC will compete in the Wisner-Pilger Class.

High School

Andes Central 3, TDA 1

ARMOUR — Payton Johannesson posted 15 kills and 14 digs to lead Andes Central to a 25-14, 25-19, 24-26, 25-21 victory over Tripp-Delmont-Armour in prep volleyball action on Tuesday.

Cybil Chytka had six kills, two blocks and three ace serves, and Maddie Gray had 12 digs and three ace serves for Andes Central. Emily Houseman posted 15 assists, Brooke Deumier had 10 assists, Rebecca Lehmann had 10 digs and Johannesson added three ace serves and two blocks in the win.

Becca Brown had six kills and 32 digs, and Hannah Just had 16 assists and 15 digs to lead TDA. Jessica Sandau finished with five kills and 20 digs. Jeana Nuss had 16 digs, Maci Harrington had 13 digs and Payton Schafers had three blocks and three ace serves for the Nighthawks.

Andes Central, 6-8, travels to Dakota Mitchell today (Thursday). TDA travels to Mitchell Christian today.

ANDES CENTRAL (6-8)	.....	25	25	24
TRIPP-DELMONT-ARMOUR (3-8)	.....	14	19	26

West Holt 3, Niobrara-Verdigre 2

ATKINSON, Neb. — West Holt outlasted Niobrara-Verdigre 25-12, 25-13, 25-13, 25-13, 25-13.

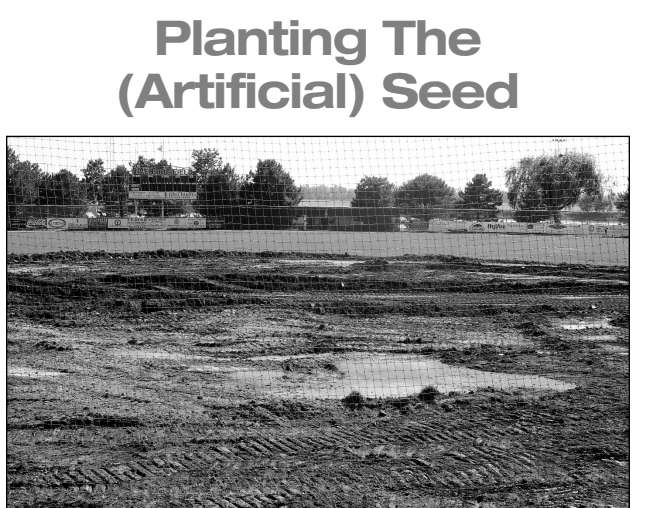
Freeman Girls Claim Cornbelt Conference X-Country Title

FREEMAN — The Freeman girls and McCrossan boys claimed top honors in the Cornbelt Conference Cross Country Meet, held Wednesday at Valley View Golf Course in Freeman.

Cailey Roth and Rebecca Eberts finished 1-2 as Freeman beat out Howard 8-18 for the girls' team title. Roth clocked a 16:11.89 over the 4,000-meter course, with Eberts finishing in 16:57.27. Hanson's Ellie Tuschen placed third in 17:09.89.

Canistota's Mason Decker won the 5,000-meter boys' race in 19:39.99, just ahead of three from McCrossan: John

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Workers began preparing the groundwork for the new artificial turf infield at Yankton's Riverside Field on Wednesday. The work is expected to be completed in time for Mount Marty College to host the annual Alumni Game there on Oct. 11. For more on the work, go online to www.yankton.net.

JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D