

Perseverance Paying Off For Coyote Seniors

Soccer: USD Already Boasts Most Wins In Division I Era With Eight Matches To Play

BY JEREMY HOECK

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VERMILLION — Memories of 2011 are still fresh in Lauren Bennett's mind.

She was one of 21 freshmen for the University of South Dakota soccer team that won one game their first season, followed by two in 2012.

Progress was slow, but in time, the wins started coming.

"It's crazy to think how far we've come," said Bennett, now a senior defender for the Coyotes, who open Summit League action Friday at home against Omaha at 4 p.m.

With the 8-game conference schedule still remaining, the Coyotes (7-4) already boast the program's most wins since 2006 — and the most in the Division I era.

Since Bennett and the eight other remaining players joined the program for that 2011 class (which had the highest number of freshmen in the country), USD has jumped from a 1-13-3 record to 2-13-3 in 2012 and to 6-8-4 last season.

The other seniors are Brittlyn Dillow, Shannon Keller, Makena Cameron, Sam Harvey, Kaiti Porter, Keighley Morrow, Kylee Willer and Colleen Reeves.

"All these seniors got more play-

ing time than any team their freshman year, and now they want to make a difference," head coach Mandy Green said Monday.

An early trial by fire understandably expedited the learning curve, Bennett added.

"It took our class a little bit longer to know what to do, really. We didn't have that leadership," said Bennett, who was Monday named the Summit League Defensive Player of the Week.

"We were thrown into the fire there, and had to learn how to do everything on our own."

In time, those players — along with recruiting classes that contin-

ued to improve, according to Green — eventually started winning games.

"It's really gratifying to see the improvement of our program, and to see that hard work does pay off," Bennett said.

"We stuck through it." And now, USD is threatening to break some school records that once were probably unrealistic.

Through 11 games, the Coyotes are within sight of the single-season school record for goals, assists and shutouts.

• The record for goals is 55, set in 2005, and the Coyotes have 33 this season

• The record for assists is 40, also set in 2005, and the Coyotes have 33

• The record for most shutouts is eight, set in 2005, and the Coyotes have recorded five.

Two of those shutouts this season were against lower-level teams — Northern State and College of Saint Mary, but it's been more so what USD has done, than the competition it has faced, according to Green.

"They're putting into action things they've learned," she said. "They've learned what works, and

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Post-Season Action



P&D FILE PHOTO

Yankton's Cole Lewno tries to split a pair of Mitchell defenders during their boys' soccer match earlier this season at Lewis & Clark Soccer Park. Lewno is the leading scorer for the Bucks, who open the SDHSAA Class AA playoffs tonight (Tuesday) at home against Pierre.

Soccer | SDHSAA Playoffs

Bucks Set For Quarters

BY JEREMY HOECK

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As John Dannenbring watched his teammates warm up before Monday's practice, he couldn't help but think back two years.

Then a sophomore, Dannenbring was on the Yankton Bucks soccer team that won a state club championship — the school's first since 2005.

"I always look back to the year we won, and I remember how relaxed we were," Dannenbring, a team captain, said before Monday's practice. "That's what we need now."

"We can be excited, but we have to stay with what's worked for us."

Riding a six-game winning streak, third-seeded Yankton opens the South Dakota Class AA State Playoffs tonight (Tuesday) against No. 6 Pierre. The game starts at 6 p.m. at Lewis & Clark Soccer Park.

Six other seniors — Dylan Becker, Connor Chambers, Osmar Pacheco, Alex Wieseler, Spencer Schade and Patrick Weinandt — were on that 2012 championship team, which won the tournament in Rapid City.

The biggest change now, though, is that soccer is a sanctioned sport in South Dakota.

"We've been at that level, and that pressure has been there to perform,"

"We've been at that level, and that pressure has been there to perform. To win a championship, you need that next level."

WARREN BRENNER, YHS HEAD COACH

said head coach Warren Brenner, who coached that title squad. "To win a championship, you need that next level."

Yankton (9-1-1) has been playing at a high level the last half of the regular season.

The Bucks, whose only loss was to Sioux Falls Roosevelt on Sept. 4, have out-scored their last six opponents 20-6.

"Some years you hit your peak right away and go downhill, but that's not what we wanted this year," said Dannenbring, who has scored five goals.

The only other blemish for Yankton was a scoreless draw with Sioux Falls O'Gorman in the third game of the season.

"We really progressed and picked our game up the last couple games," said sophomore Cole Lewno, who has a team-high 13 goals.

A dominant regular season wasn't void of adversity, though, according to Brenner.

"We're looking pretty good; pretty solid," he said. "We made a couple changes that have been positive, and we're really connecting well as a team."

"That's probably been the biggest thing."

Among the changes was at goalkeeper. Because of an illness to sophomore Gabe Wenzlaff, the Bucks moved freshman Trevor Rafferty to the net. And once Wenzlaff was healthy enough to return, he was moved to forward.

Wieseler and Weinandt, both seniors, were moved to the wing, and junior Cody Perakslis was inserted into the defense. Then came freshman Jack Wolfgram from the junior varsity ranks into a midfielder spot.

"To have a freshman come in and take a role on varsity is pretty tough, but he's been doing a great job," Brenner said.

The team also had to work around a knee injury to senior Osmar

Pacheco (who could return for the semifinals if Yankton advances, Brenner said).

In response, the team knew it had to step up its game, according to Lewno.

"We switched out our midfielders a little bit, which made things run faster and smoother, I feel like," he said. "We've had more passes to the middle."

All of those areas were in full effect when Yankton beat Pierre 4-2 in last Friday's regular season finale, according to Chambers, a senior.

"I feel like that was one of our better games of the season," he said. "We clicked on everything and we were really rolling."

Facing the same team only four days later has its benefits and drawbacks, Chambers added.

"They'll be hungry to upset us on our home turf," he said.

The winner between Yankton and Pierre will play Saturday against the winner of No. 2 Sioux Falls Lincoln and No. 7 Spearfish.

The state championship game will be played Oct. 11 at 7 p.m. in Mitchell.

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

College

Coyote Classic

DAKOTA DUNES — The Creighton men and North Dakota State women lead the opening day of the University of South Dakota Coyote Classic golf tournament, being held at Dakota Dunes Country Club.

Creighton holds a four-stroke lead over USD after two rounds, shooting a two-round score of 591. USD shot 595, followed by Omaha (596) and NDSU (600).

Creighton's Jonah Buss leads with a 1-under 143, followed by teammate Johnny Spellerberg at even par. USD's Jordan Rykal and Cole Peterson each shot 2-over 146 on the first day. Peterson is competing individually.

The NDSU women shot 609 on the opening day, ranking 18 strokes ahead of Drake. Bellevue sits at 632, followed by USD and Creighton, each at 640.

Drake's Madison Glennie (148) and Arianna Gastelum (149) lead the way. NDSU's Sarah Storand also shot 149. USD's Brenna Levick is tied for fourth at 150.

The third and final round is set for today (Tuesday), starting at 9 a.m.

GPAC Men's No. 2

FREMONT, Neb. — Mount Marty College remained in 11th place after the second round of the Great Plains Athletic Conference men's golf tournament, held Monday in Fremont, Nebraska.

MMC shot 333 on the day, led by Dylan Brendle's 75. The score ranked him tied for 10th on the day.

Also for MMC, Luke Loecker shot 85, Robbie Neswick shot 86, Michael O'Connell carded an 87 and Collin Matthews shot 90.

Midland's Brady Vancura and Garrett Giesselman tied for low honors on the day, each shooting 71. The Warriors had the low round of the day at 292, seven strokes better than Northwestern.

Monday's round put Midland in the lead of the overall tournament at the midway point, giving the Warriors a three-stroke lead over Nebraska Wesleyan, 591 to 594. MMC is at 672 after two rounds. The tournament concludes in the spring with two more rounds. The overall team champion and the individual champion, if not on the team champ, qualifies for the NAIA Tournament.

Wagner Wins 12th Straight Canton Edges Tanagers In Region 2A

Volleyball: Parkston Downs Flyers For 12th Victory Of 2014 Season

WAGNER — The Wagner Red Raiders swept Vermillion 25-16, 25-16, 25-16 in prep volleyball action on Monday.

Wagner was led offensively by 11 kills from Emily Brunson and 14 assists from Krista Dvorak. Brooklyn Tolver had 15 digs, and Ali Kuca and Rachel Dion had 13 digs each in the win.

For Vermillion, Chloe Nielsen had six kills and Rachel Finnegan had five kills and 14 digs to lead the way. Kayla Stammer posted 19 assists.

Wagner, 13-3 and winners of 12 straight, travels to Winner on Thursday. Vermillion hosts top-ranked Sioux Falls Christian today (Tuesday).

VERMILLION (1-11).....16 16 16
WAGNER (13-3).....25 25 25

Parkston 3, Freeman 1
PARKSTON — The Parkston Trojans downed Free-

man 25-18, 25-19, 24-26, 25-13 in prep volleyball action on Monday.

Kenzie Lee had eight kills and two ace serves, and Halli Heisinger had seven kills to lead a balanced Parkston attack. Whitney Weber had 18 assists and Hanna Heisinger had four ace serves in the victory.

For Freeman, Shelby Jensen led the way with six kills, 13 digs and three ace serves. Haley Glanzer and Erika Sage had five kills each, with Glanzer recording 13 digs and Sage 10 digs. Mady Pravecek posted 24 assists and 14 digs. Vanessa Dowden had 20 digs and Ashley Glanzer added 11 digs for the Flyers.

Parkston travels to Tripp to face Tripp-Delmont-Armour today (Tuesday). Freeman hosts Ethan on Thursday.

FREEMAN (2-6).....18 19 26 13
PARKSTON (12-4).....25 25 24 25

Mount Vernon-Plankinton 3, Tripp-Delmont-Armour 0

TRIPP — MaKaela Karst recorded seven kills, nine digs and four ace serves to lead Class A Mount Vernon-Plankinton past Tripp-Delmont-Armour 25-14, 25-21, 25-8 on Monday in Tripp.

Mikayla Weiss added six kills and five aces, while Megan Bultsma had three kills and five blocks for the Titans (12-0).

In the loss for the Nighthawks (3-10), Jessica Sandau posted four kills and 14 digs, Becca Brown had 15 digs, and Hannah Just added eight set assists.

TDA hosts Parkston in Tripp tonight (Tuesday) and MVP plays in a Marion tournament on Saturday.

MOUNT VERNON-PLANKINTON (12-0).....25 25 25
TRIPP-DELMONT-ARMOUR (3-10).....14 21 8

BY ALAN DALE AND MARK UPWARD

Vermillion Plain Talk

SIoux FALLS — Nine golf teams hit the links at Bakker Crossing Golf Course in Sioux Falls Monday to compete in the Region 2A golf tournament.

Four would go to the Class A state finals seven days later. One of them would be a crew from Vermillion.

Led by Carter Andre's 78 and Cooper Williams' 79 the Vermillion Tanagers' boys golf team finished second Monday at the Region 2A golf finals at Bakker Crossing in Sioux Falls.

The Tanagers missed out on a Region title by one-stroke, shooting a 327 compared to Canton's 326.

Tea Area (357) and Dakota Valley (360) also qualified for the Class A state finals next week at Southern Hills Golf Course in Hot Springs.

Andre and Williams finished fourth and fifth-place re-



MARK UPWARD/FOR THE PLAIN TALK

Vermillion's Carter Andre lines up his putt on the 18th green at Bakker Crossing Golf Course on Monday.