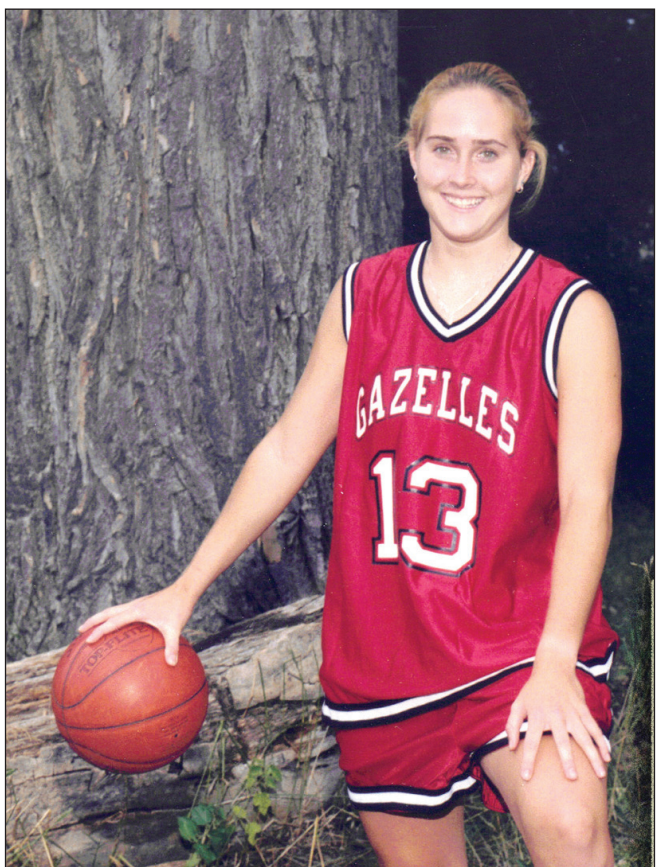




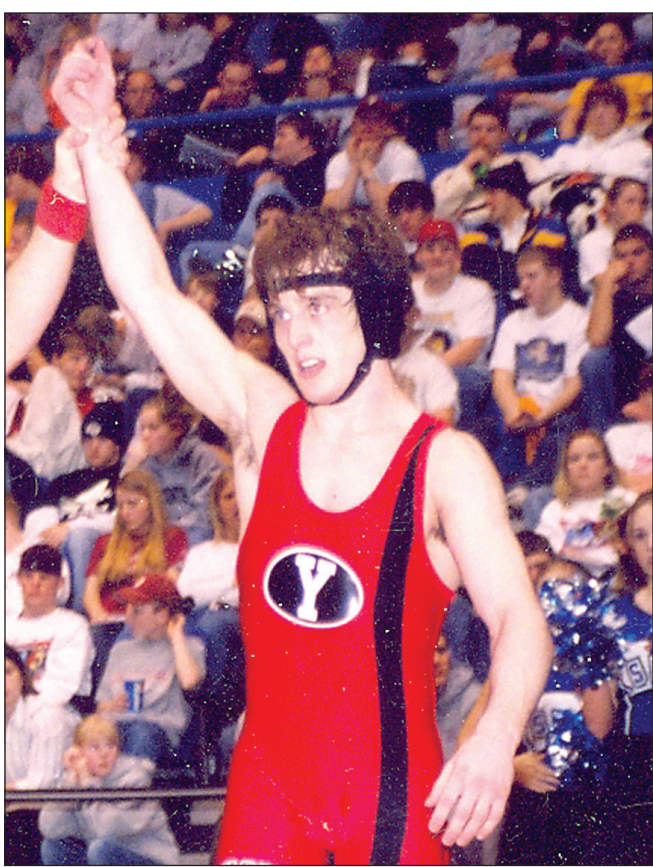
PHOTO: BRENDA WILLCUTS

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Shari Johnson (left), Dan Fitzsimmons (center) and Nick Smith will be inducted into the Yankton High School Athletic Hall of Fame at 5 p.m. Friday, Sept. 18, as part of Yankton's annual Pioneer Day homecoming festivities.

Photos Courtesy Of The
Yankton School District/
Photography By Jerry



3 To Join YHS Shrine

Fitzsimmons, Johnson And Smith To Enter Athletic Hall

BY JEREMY HOECK

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When Dan Fitzsimmons was in high school out in Middle Island, New York, he wasn't accustomed to the kind of history he later saw while in Yankton. He had graduated from a relatively new school, and in 1986 was hired as gymnastics coach at Yankton High School which had a rich athletic history.

"When I came to Yankton and started coaching, that was in the infancy of the Hall of Fame," he said. "I was mesmerized by that kind of history that Yankton High School and the community had.

"At the time, I never would have imagined I'd be (part of it)."

That will now become a reality for Fitzsimmons.

He, along with two former athletic stars, will be inducted into the YHS Athletic Hall of Fame next Friday during a 5 p.m. ceremony in the high school commons.

The 2015 class will include Fitzsimmons (former cross

country and gymnastics coach, now at the University of South Dakota), Shari Johnson (basketball and volleyball) and Nick Smith (wrestling).

Here is a look at all three inductees:

DAN FITZSIMMONS

In the coaching world, there's usually a cycle: New coach comes aboard, is mentored by experienced coaches, then becomes a mentor for someone new.

Dan Fitzsimmons knows all about that cycle. He lived it for two decades.

"It's kind of the Yankton way," he said. "It works."

He is living proof.

Fitzsimmons, a 50-year-old New York native, came to Yankton High School in 1986 as a recent graduate of the University of South Dakota, where he was a standout track athlete. He had applied for a job in the Britton-Hecla school district and had also thrown his hat in the ring for the head gymnastics coaching position in Yankton, with the idea that if he didn't get either job, he could go back to USD — where he would've had a fifth season of eligibility.

As fate would have it, Fitzsimmons was offered the position

in Yankton, where he would spend his entire tenure (1986-07) as head gymnastics coach. For all he did for the Yankton High School cross country and track programs, gymnastics is where he got his start.

"I had my first success as a gymnastics coach," Fitzsimmons said. "If I look back, that's the one thing I miss at this position (at USD), I miss coaching gymnastics.

"I was the head coach the whole time in Yankton, so I'd like to think part of the induction is because of that."

A large part of Fitzsimmons' success in Yankton is due, he said, to mentors such as Yankton's Gene Bormann, Bob Winter and Jim Miner, as well as Mark Upward at Vermillion High School, another long-time gymnastics coach.

Fitzsimmons later became a varsity assistant coach for cross country in 1989, and a year later became varsity assistant for track. Such opportunities became available, as Fitzsimmons remembers, because Winter took over as YHS activities director in 1989.

"Everyone has their time, it takes a lot of humility," he said. "But sometimes it takes someone to step down to give someone else an opportunity."

YANKTON | PAGE 10B

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Bede Art Gallery | Monday - Friday | 8:00 am - 4:30 pm | "Regional Landscapes" with Artist Sharon Gray | August 31 - October 2

The Saint John's Bible on display in MMC Library | Mon-Thurs: 7:30 am - 10 pm | Fri: 7:30 am - 5 pm | Sat: 1-5 pm | Sun: 1-10 pm

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12
10:30 AM Men's and Women's Cross Country - Dakota State Invite
11:00 AM - Madison, SD
12:00 PM Volleyball - Montana State University - Valley City, ND
2:00 PM Softball - Black Hills State University - Mitchell, SD
3:00 PM Softball - Dakota Wesleyan University - Mitchell, SD
Volleyball - Dickinson State University - Valley City, ND

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13
12:00 PM Softball - Iowa Lakes CC - Mitchell, SD
2:00 PM Softball - Dakota Wesleyan University - Mitchell, SD
7:00 PM Great Plains Writers Tour presents Ted Kooser
- Marian Auditorium

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15
12:30 PM Mass - South Dining Room
4:00 PM Meet the President - Welcome Center
5:30 PM Yankton Children's Choir Practice - Bistro
7:30 PM Volleyball - Dakota State University - Cimpr Arena
9:30 PM Rosary - Peace Chapel

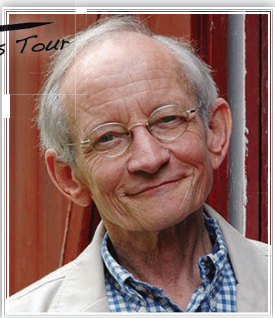
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16
6:00 PM Softball - Blue/Gold Scrimmage - Riverside Softball Diamonds
7:30 PM Volleyball - Dordt College - Sioux Center, IA

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17
12:00 PM Noon Forum: "The Constitution: Then & Now" with Dr. Dana DeWitt, Dr. Rich Lofthus, Dr. Terry Nelson - SDR

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18
7:30 PM Volleyball - Northwestern College - Cimpr Arena
TBD Women's Golf - Briar Cliff Invite - Sioux City, IA
TBD Men's Golf - GPAC #1 - Orange City, IA

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19
12:00 PM Softball - Concordia University - Sioux City, IA
1:00 PM Women's Soccer - Clarke University - Dabucque, IA
2:00 PM Softball - Briar Cliff University - Sioux City, IA
3:30 PM Men's Soccer - Clarke University - Dabucque, IA
TBD Women's Golf - Briar Cliff Invite - Sioux City, IA
TBD Men's Golf - GPAC - Orange City, IA

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