

Coyotes Take Two, Move To 6-3

BY JEREMY HOECK
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The prospect of a let-down was certainly possible.

It was even something University of South Dakota men's basketball coach Craig Smith said he thought about immediately after last Saturday's emotional, double overtime win at Minnesota.

The Coyotes couldn't afford to play sloppy.

"You immediately think about, 'We better be ready to go in three days,'" Smith said after his team beat Kansas City 79-70 on Tuesday night at the DakotaDome.

There were certainly times — particularly early — when it looked like USD (6-3) wasn't entirely locked in against the Kangaroos, who had earlier this season beaten South Dakota State.

That was perhaps to be expected, as Smith said, given USD basically had a day and a half to prepare for a Kansas City squad that is long, athletic and aggressive.

"Once we got through about the first 10-12 minutes, and a lot of screaming and yelling, we figured some things out," Smith said.

Any sign of a potential let-down were squashed once the Coyotes started to beat the 2-2-1 press and started getting out in transition.

"We weren't really focused on going out there and having anything to prove, we just wanted to out there and play basically as hard as it could," said

senior Tre Burnette, who had 18 points and seven rebounds.

On a night when USD's guards struggled early — leading scorer Casey Kasperbauer (14.5) was limited to three points — senior reserve Trey Norris provided a late spark.

Norris, who played 27 minutes, scored 12 of his team-high 19 points in the final 5:02.

It wasn't as though Norris lifted the Coyotes from a huge deficit into the lead (USD led 66-56 when he started his surge), but his calming presence was the key for the Coyotes.

"We expect that that out of T-Nill, coming in and giving us a spark," Burnette said. "We look to him to be one of the leaders on the team."

Norris said later that because of the way Kansas City was playing Kasperbauer (who was 1-of-7 shooting), it opened things up a bit for him to get some open looks.

"The shots just found me a couple times and I knocked them down," Norris said.

With USD leading 67-61 with 2:18 remaining, Norris hit a three-pointer with the shot winding down. On the next trip, he tacked another three-pointer to give the Coyotes a double-digit lead.

"He plays with a chip on his shoulder," Smith said. "He's not afraid of a whole lot."

"I've always felt he's a better shooter than his numbers show," the coach added. "When he shoots a



JAMES D. CIMBUREK/PRESS AND DAKOTAN
South Dakota's Shy McClelland, 3, is fouled as he goes up for a shot in a crowded lane during the Coyotes' men's basketball game with Kansas City on Tuesday at the DakotaDome.

three, I always feel comfortable with it."

Another USD senior, Eric Robertson, came up big for the Coyotes. This week's Summit League Player of the Week, Robertson scored 12 points and rabbed nine rebounds.

And off the bench, freshman post Dan Jech continued to impress. Jech — who

Smith anchors USD defensively — scored 10 points and hauled in six rebounds.

LaVell Bell led Kansas City (5-4) with 25 points.

Off to their best start since the 2007-08 season, the Coyotes will look for a sixth straight win Saturday when Cal State Bakersfield

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Robertson, Seekamp Named Summit League POTW

ELMHURST, Ill.—South Dakota senior forward Eric Robertson (Wayzata, Minn.) has been named the men's basketball Summit League Player of the Week for the period ended Dec. 6. Robertson joined Omaha's Devin Patterson in this week's selections.



Robertson

Robertson tied his career-high of 16 points and had four rebounds and a steal in leading the Coyotes to their historic 85-81, double-overtime victory against Minnesota Saturday at Williams Arena. The win ended the Gophers' 47-game, non-conference home winning streak, which was the second-longest active streak in the nation.

Robertson scored 13 of his 16 points in the second half and overtime periods. He scored seven straight Coyote points near the end of regulation to help force overtime. He hit two game-tying jumpers in the first overtime, including a shot with seven seconds left, to force a second overtime.

Robertson made 7 of 11 shots from the field and made two free throws. He played with four fouls for 16 minutes during the second half and overtime periods.

The Coyotes (5-3) return to the court at 7 p.m. Tuesday against Kansas City at the DakotaDome in Vermillion.

South Dakota senior guard Nicole Seekamp has been named the Summit League Women's Basketball Player of the Week for the period ended Dec. 6, as released by the league office Monday.

The Renmark, South Australia, native garners her third career player of the week award after averaging 21 points, 4.5 assists, 4.5 steals, and 4.0 rebounds in a pair of Coyote wins. She also posted a 2.3 assist-to-turnover ratio for the week.



Seekamp

Seekamp scored a season-high 24 points with five assists and three steals to lead the Coyotes past Drake. The Bulldogs entered the game undefeated, ranked No. 8 in the Collegelinsider.com Mid-Major Poll and No. 13 in the NCAA RPI.

Seekamp returned to the court Saturday with a victory over Portland State. She tallied 18 points with six steals and four assists in just 15 minutes of action.

Seekamp shot 50 percent (15-of-30) from the field and 90.9 percent (10-of-11) at the line for the week.

In the national rankings for the season, Seekamp's 6.5 assists-per-game is 16th and 3.0 steals-per-game is 32nd. Her 83.3 percent average from the free-throw line ranks 98th.

Van Ginkel Third in National Freshman Of The Year Voting

University of South Dakota defensive end Andrew Van Ginkel (Rock Valley, Iowa) finished third in the voting for the STATS FCS Freshman Player of the Year Award announced Tuesday.

Northern Arizona quarterback Case Cookus finished first in the voting and North Dakota running back John Santiago was second. Van Ginkel was one of six defensive players on the 20-person ballot.



Van Ginkel

Van Ginkel earned first team all-Missouri Valley Football Conference honors and was named the conference's Freshman of the Year in November. He finished the regular season second in the MVFC in both sacks (9.0) and tackles-for-loss (18.0). He was the Coyotes' fifth-leading tackler with 56 stops. Van Ginkel also recovered three fumbles, forced two, blocked a kick and had two pass breakups.

Jessen Named To Academic All-Summit League Team

South Dakota sophomore setter Brittany Jessen was named to the 2015 Summit League Volleyball Academic All-League Team, which was announced by the league on Wednesday.

"I can't say enough about how hard Britt works on and off the court," said South Dakota head coach Leanne Williamson. "She is a great example of what a student-athlete can accomplish when you are dedicated to all aspects of your life. She is a leader both in the classroom and on the court."



Jessen

Jessen, the 2015 Summit League Setter of the Year, earned her first Academic All-League selection. She joins six other student-athletes who are honored for their combined athletic and academic performances this season.

Jessen is an English education major and has a grade point average of 3.93.

This year, Jessen ranked 33rd in the nation and second in the Summit with 1,260 assists. She was 44th in the nation and first in the Summit in assists per set with 10.77. For active career leaders at the Division I level, Jessen ranks 16th in assists per set with 10.75.

Tanagers Drop Opener To Huskies

BY ELYSE BRIGHTMAN
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The Vermillion High School girls' basketball team dropped the season opener in Elk Point-Jefferson 50-39 Tuesday night.

"Defensively we had a couple slip ups here and there and we need to do a better job of rebounding, but unfortunately offensively, we didn't have enough offense tonight," said Vermillion head coach Jon Brooks.

The Tanagers kept the score close in the first half with offensive contribution from sophomores Kasey Jensen, Haleigh Melstad and Madison Martinez, but the Huskies were able to pull away in the fourth quarter for the 11-point win.

"I think both ways it was pretty sloppy on offense," Brooks said. "We were not very good on offense and I don't think they were that great on offense either, but when they needed to make shots they did. We got the game to three or four or five numerous times and we were trying to get over the hump there and then we would turn it over or something would happen and they'd make a big shot and they'd get it back up to seven or eight and we just never seemed to be able to close the gap."

Brooks was pleased the way the defense was able to shut down the Huskies' two biggest offensive threats in Payton Donnelly and McKenzie Mennenga.

"Defensively, obviously Mennenga and Donnelly are really good players for them and it looks like we did a pretty good job on Mennenga," he said. "We forced her to a tough shooting night, but Donnelly made a lot of threes against us and she really kind of hurt us. We had four girls running on defense against Mennenga and Donnelly. I thought those girls did a good job. They really tried to wear them down."

Next up, the Tanagers travel to Tea for the Tea Area Classic to take on Aberdeen Roncalli at 12 noon.



BY ELYSE BRIGHTMAN/ FOR THE PLAIN TALK
Vermillion's Kyleigh Melstad dribbles the ball downcourt in the Tanagers season opener Tuesday night at Elk Point-Jefferson. The Tanagers went on to fall to the Huskies 50-39.

Leber Highlights SD Sports Hall Of Fame Inductees

Former Minnesota Vikings linebacker Ben Leber headlines a group of 10 people selected for induction into the South Dakota Sports Hall of Fame Class of 2016. The group will be inducted on Saturday, April 9 at the Sioux Falls Convention Center.

Also chosen was Steve Heidenreich, the first South Dakotan to run a four-minute mile. Other athletes joining Leber and Heidenreich include Greg Hansen, Doug Schlepp (basketball) and Jim Mitchell (basketball), Patricia Reisdorfer (running) and Joe Trudeau (football). In addition, the class will include Rapid City Stevens wrestling coach Tom Long, Northern State basketball coach/athletic director Bob Olson and referee/volunteer Rich Hanson.

Ticket information for the 2016 Hall of Fame Banquet will be released at a later date. With this class of inductees, the SD Sports Hall of Fame boasts membership of 276.

Leber was actually selected last year but was unable to attend the induction banquet. Leber lives in Edina, Minn.; Hansen, Hanson, Reisdorfer and Mitchell in Sioux Falls; Trudeau in Jefferson; Long in Centennial, Colo.; Schlepp in Tucson, Ariz.; Olson in Aberdeen; and Heidenreich in Breckenridge,

Colo.
Below are bios of the inductees:

Ben Leber

A 1997 Vermillion High grad, Leber played 10 seasons as a linebacker in the NFL, mostly as a starter. The 6-foot-3, 244-pounder was a third-round draft pick of the San Diego Chargers in 2002 and was an immediate standout as he was named to the Pro Football Weekly and Football Digest All-Rookie teams, finishing the year with 50 tackles, five sacks and three forced fumbles. He had 80 and 60 tackles the next two seasons before injuries limited him to 22 tackles in 2005. As an unrestricted free agent, Leber signed with the Vikings in 2006. That season, he had 46 tackles, three sacks, three forced fumbles and two fumble recoveries, including one in the end zone against the Detroit Lions for the only TD of his career. The next season was even better with 67 tackles and five sacks. In 2008 he had 64 tackles and he had 46 in 2009 and 2010. He played briefly for the St. Louis Rams in 2011 before retiring. In his career, Leber had 496 tackles, 24 sacks, 12 forced fumbles and five interceptions. At Vermillion, he rushed for 1,404 yards as a junior

and 1,350 as a senior. Following his standout prep career, he became a two-time All-Big 12 linebacker at Kansas State. A third team AP All-American as a senior, he finished his career with 216 tackles which ranked fifth all-time in program history.

Steve Heidenreich

A 1971 Watertown High and Indiana University graduate, Heidenreich broke the 4-minute barrier a number of times. The 5-foot-10, 130-pounder was a top candidate to make the 1976 Olympic team in the 1,500 meters before a near fatal accident in March, 1976, when he was hit by a car while running. His best mile time was 3:58.4 in 1975. He ran a 3:38.8 1,500 (equivalent to a 3:56.0 mile) while representing the United States at a meet in Prague, Czechoslovakia, in 1975. Heidenreich anchored a 4-mile relay to a world indoor record in 1975. The first Big Ten runner to run a 4-minute mile indoors (4:00 exactly in 1976), he was Big Ten mile champ and All-American in 1975 (finishing fourth in the outdoor mile in 4:02.24). He also was sixth in the mile at the NCAA outdoor meet in 1974. In cross country for IU in 1972, Heidenreich won six straight meets, setting course records in

five. At Watertown High School, he set state records in the mile (4:11.2) and 2-mile relay (7:55.1). He finished second in the mile (4:11.8) at a national prep meet near Chicago on June 12, 1971.

Greg Hansen

A 1970 Hurley High and Dakota Wesleyan graduate, Hansen averaged a double-double for eight consecutive seasons — four at Hurley and four at DWU — and was all-conference all eight seasons. At Hurley, the two-time all-stater had 1,989 points and 1,663 rebounds with career highs of 62 points and 34 rebounds. As a freshman, Hansen averaged 13 points and 13 rebounds, upping those numbers to 24 points and 21 rebounds as a senior. Also a standout in football, Hansen was recruited by legendary Maryland coach Lefty Driesell but elected to stay in South Dakota and play for DWU. For the Tigers, the 6-foot-7 forward started all 92 games and scored in double figures 89 times for Coach Gordie Fosness. In his DWU career, he scored 2,146 points and had 1,047 rebounds. He had career averages of 23.3 points, 11.4 rebounds and 3.3 assists a game. A big man with a soft touch and good shooting range, Hansen twice led the Tigers to South Dakota Intercollegiate Conference

titles. He still holds the DWU single-season free-throw record of 92 percent. A member of the DWU, SDIC and South Dakota High School Basketball halls of fame, Hansen served as sports editor of the Mitchell Daily Republic and the Sioux Falls Argus Leader.

Rich Hanson

A 1954 Aberdeen Central and 1958 Northern State graduate, Hanson has been officiating high school and college sports since 1959. He was a high school and college basketball referee from 1959-79 and a football referee from 1963-84. He officiated the first football game at the DakotaDome in 1979. A track and field official since 1975, Hanson has been a starter for countless high school and college meets while also serving as a volunteer at the Howard Wood Dakota Relays since 1964. He has been supervisor of officials for the Sioux Interstate Conference, the Greater Dakota Conference and the Metro Conference. A commissioner of the South Dakota-Iowa Conference from 1998-2000, Hanson has been a longtime member of the Sports & Rec Committee of the Sioux Empire Area Chamber of Commerce. He