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Amy Williams named new USD women's BB coach

By James D. Cimburek
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In her previous job, Amy Williams literally built a national-caliber women's basketball program from scratch. In her new job, she'll have a lot more to work with.

Williams, a Spearfish native and former University of Nebraska standout, will be the seventh head coach in the history of the University of South Dakota, announced Monday at a press conference at the Muenster University Center on the USD campus.

Williams, the former Amy Gusso, replaces Ryun Williams, who left in May to become the head women's basketball coach at Colorado State.

In selecting Amy Williams, USD athletic director David Saylor and the selection committee chose an individual they were confident in from the start.

"I knew within 20, 30 minutes that she was really someone I wanted to focus in on a lot more," Saylor said. "She has ties to this area and she knows how to recruit this area, and that's really what it came down to for me, the bottom line for me."

Her experience includes stops at Texas-San Antonio (2000-01), Oklahoma State (2001-05) and Tulsa (2005-07), serving as recruiting coordinator at both OSU and Tulsa.

"This program needed a coach that knows what Division I kids look like, they've coached them before, all those things," Saylor said. "The head coaching experience, frankly, taking a program from scratch and having four straight winning seasons before coming here and making post-season, that was just icing on the cake for us. You know she has confidence that she can build a program and have expectations for kids."

At NAIA Division I Rogers State, Williams was the first head coach of a program that started playing in the 2007-08 season. Her Hillcats teams posted winning seasons in each of the last four years, and made the NAIA Division I Tournament the past two seasons. RSU made the quarterfinals of the national tournament this past season, finishing

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Amy Williams was introduced in Vermillion as USD's new women's basketball coach. Williams is a Spearfish native who was a four-year letterwinner in basketball at the University of Nebraska. She comes to the school after serving as the first-ever women's basketball coach at Rogers State in Oklahoma, an NAIA school where she built the program into a national title contender in just five years. Pictured on the left is USD Athletic Director David Saylor.

(Photo by David Lias)

While predicting Varilek win, Johnson remains mum on his own political future

By David Lias
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Sen. Tim Johnson said Thursday, May 31 that he believes Matt Varilek will be successful in the upcoming June 5 Democratic U.S. House primary election and will run a winning campaign against incumbent Rep. Kristi Noem (R) this fall.

The first half of the senator's prediction came true Tuesday.

"He will do very well," Johnson said of Varilek, who was a member of the senator's staff before announcing his U.S. House candidacy. "He has yet to get through his primary, which is coming up next week, but I think Matt will do very well. And his race opposed to Kristi Noem ... it will be close."

"Tom Daschle and George McGovern and I have endorsed Matt Varilek," he said. "He is a good guy, and he will be an outstanding Congressman."

Varilek won the Democratic nomination for South Dakota's lone U.S. House seat on Tuesday, sending him into what was expected to be an uphill fall battle against Republican Congresswoman Kristi Noem.

Varilek defeated Minnehaha County Commissioner Jeff Barth in a Democratic primary in which the candidates rarely mentioned each other. Instead, they targeted Noem for her votes on budget and tax issues and allegations that she missed a lot of House Agriculture Committee meetings.

However, Noem could be a formidable opponent in November because Republicans far outnumber Democrats in South Dakota and she has raised at least five times more than the two Democratic hopefuls combined.



Sen. Tim Johnson tours classroom and a lecture facility Thursday in the new Beacom Hall building which houses the Beacom School of Business on the University of South Dakota campus. Serving as tour guide is Mike Keller, dean of the business school.

(Photo by David Lias)

Varilek said his campaign would go back to work Wednesday morning in an effort to defeat Noem. He said he would focus on her votes on issues such as Medicare and try to cast her as a leader in a dysfunctional Congress.

"It's never easy to knock off an incumbent," Varilek said. "I think we have a great opportunity, given that dismal record."

Noem said she's proud of her record and hopes the general election campaign will focus on issues that matter to South Dakotans.

"I am running for re-election to continue fighting for fiscal responsibility, to work towards replacing the president's health care law with an approach that

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Two incumbents ousted in local elections

By David Lias
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Two incumbents were ousted by local voters in the Vermillion municipal and Vermillion school board elections held Tuesday.

In a close race, challenger Kelsey Collier-Wise defeated incumbent Jenny French and will be a new alderman representing the Central Ward when French's term ends this summer.

Collier-Wise received 90 votes, which is about 53 percent of the ballots cast by Central Ward voters. French received 79 votes.

Mark Bottolfson, the current president of the Vermillion School Board, failed in his attempt to be

elected to another term, coming in third in a three-man race to fill two vacancies on the board.

Bottolfson's 424 votes represent about 28 percent of the ballots cast in Tuesday's election. Tim Schwasinger, who will be a new face on the board when the new terms begin later this summer, was the highest vote getter at 603, which is about 39 percent of total votes cast.

Incumbent board member Dave Stammer won re-election with 518 votes, which is about 33 percent of the total.

Voter turnout for the school board and city council elections was only 14 percent. Of 7,940 eligible voters, only 1,122 cast ballots on Tuesday.

Daugaard urges Girls State delegates to 'think big'

By Travis Gulbrandson
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Stay persistent and determined, get involved in public service and dream big.

These are the three pieces of advice Gov. Dennis Daugaard offered the attendees of 2012 South Dakota Girls State, whom he addressed Friday morning in Aalfs Auditorium.

Daugaard opened with a quote from Calvin Coolidge: "Nothing can take the place

of persistence and determination. Talent will not. Nothing is more common than unsuccessful men of talent. Genius will not. Unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not. The world is full of educated derelicts.

"Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent."

Daugaard said he was "not knocking" genius, talent or

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