

Coyotes Prepare For NCAA Outdoor Championships

BY JEREMY HOECK
Press and Dakotan

Amber Eichkorn and Hunter Wilkes don't even bother looking at their seed positions anymore. The women's track duo for the University of South Dakota have proven they have a knack for exceeding expectations on some of the biggest stages. The question now is, can they do it again?

Both juniors, Eichkorn (10,000-meter run) and Wilkes (pole vault) qualified for and will compete in the NCAA Division I Outdoor Track & Field Championships, which begins Wednesday in Eugene, Oregon. Cody Snyder also qualified in the discus.

Two weeks ago, each were ranked outside the top-12 in their respective event – Wilkes was ranked No. 22, Eichkorn No. 27 – heading into the NCAA West Preliminaries, but both qualified for nationals.

"It finally happened," said Eichkorn, a native of Wichita, Kansas. "Last year going into regionals, I didn't intend to do that well. This year ... it was just fortunate that everything lined up perfectly for me."

As it has for the past seven months.

Eichkorn helped guide USD to its first Summit League cross country title last November, then won a pair of titles at the conference outdoor track meet. And now, she's headed to the national track meet for the first time.

"To make it to Eugene, our game plan would be to treat it like last year's regional meet, go out and see who I can beat," she said.

Eichkorn, who has held a lead in her last three 10,000-meter runs, qualified with the 17th-best time of 34:32.12.

In the case of Wilkes, she was perhaps even more of a long shot to qualify for nationals, needing a personal best mark of 13 feet, 11 inches to reach Eugene.

Can she keep that momentum rolling? That's the plan, the Chandler, Arizona native said.

"Every time I go to a meet, I definitely have expectations," she said. "I have certain heights I want to hit. Going into this one, I have high expectations.

"Now that I got the new PR (personal record), I want to push it."

And she'll need to do exactly that to join fellow USD vaulters Bethany Firsick and Emily Grove to reach first team All-American status.

There are 14 vaulters who have gone at least 14 feet this year. And according to USD sports information, over the past decade it has taken an average vault of 13-7 to become a first team All-American.

Having spent time with and jumping against Grove and Firsick (who graduated) in practice throughout her career no doubt helped push Wilkes.

"It just gives me more motivation to keep going," Wilkes said. "There's a lot of great vaulters, especially at our school. I see what they're doing and I want to do it too."

It's that kind of depth in distance events and pole vault that has USD climbing the ladder in the D-I ranks.

The track program sent five athletes to nationals in 2013, and although nobody qualified a year ago, sending three to Eugene this week shows progress, Wilkes said.

"It shows that throughout the years, we'll be getting more people here and more people to nationals," she said.

Between the Summit League success and the number of athletes who qualified for the NCAA West Preliminaries, the Coyote programs continue to move forward, Eichkorn said.

"It's a great stepping stone," she said. "We have so many girls that were so close to making it. It should show every newcomer that's coming in, that South Dakota is a place for somewhere to grow."

Annual VCDC Golf Social

The Vermillion Chamber and Development Company (VCDC) is hosting its annual golf social Monday June 22 at The Bluffs Golf Course.

The social will be played in a scramble format with teams of four. A scramble has all team members shooting from the tee then choosing the best shot. Team members then move their balls to the place of the best shot and all members shoot from that spot. The score is kept as a team score, not individual.

Registration begins at 11:45 a.m. and golfing begins at 1 p.m. with a shotgun start. Dinner and a social will follow at 6 p.m.

The social requires a team entry fee that covers golf, dinner and team photos. Golf carts are available through The Bluffs.

The VCDC is offering door prizes and hole-in-one competitions on holes 12 and 8. Awards will be announced after dinner.

Participants do not need to be members of the VCDC sign up.

For more information or to sign up, contact the VCDC at 605-624-5571 or the website www.vermillionchamber.com.

Opening Ceremonies Bring Teams Together

COLUMN BY JEREMY HOECK

The Press and Dakotan

I've long wondered what it would take for the entire community of Yankton to really embrace what our town boasts in the world of archery.

Sunday might have been a giant step in that direction.

The opening ceremony for the upcoming World Archery Youth Championships (WAYC) not only featured the archers from 51 countries, but the hundreds of volunteers for the tournament, as well as probably 200 spectators who came to watch.

That's probably what it will take for the general Yankton citizen to really understand what's going on out at the Easton Yankton Archery Complex: Seeing it for themselves, in person.

They can read all stories in the Press & Dakotan and probably see some international archers around town, but until you can see for yourself how 'big' this tournament is, it's understandably difficult to grasp. Seeing the line of 52 flags being brought in during Sunday's Parade of Nations was, even for those of who regularly spend time around archery, an eye-open-

er. Fifty-two countries. That's a lot.

In another sense, the way the local WAYC committee organized Sunday's opening ceremony could also go a long way toward connecting the average Yankton resident with the archery community.

There was the Parade of Nations, followed by brief speeches from a handful of officials, and then a performance by the Osni Ponca Heduska (Warrior) Society. The Native American group encouraged people to come out and dance with them, and that's exactly what happened. And it was awesome to see.

Not only were volunteers out there having fun, but so were archers from nearly every country. You couldn't help but get a kick out of the way some of those archers interacted with each other. They'll be intense competitors starting Tuesday, but for an hour Sunday, they were in the same boat: Awed by what they saw.

It was the same thing during the buffalo performance. I stood there next to a group of archers from the Netherlands and Germany, and so many other countries, and they were all talking and laughing in their native languages. It was quite the sight.

Vermillion High School Hosts Youth Football Camp

BY ELYSE BRIGHTMAN
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The Vermillion High School football team put on its annual youth camp this week on the high school practice fields.

Head coach Andy Homan and some of the varsity players put on the camp to teach youth players about the fundamentals of the game.

"For the younger kids, it's to show them and tell them what each position is so when they are watching it or playing it they know what (the positions) do," Homan said. "Overall, we just want to work on the fundamentals of being a wide receiver, being a lineman

on offense, being a running back, being a quarterback and then (Wednesday) we'll do defensive. We'll just work on helping them get their skills a little better."

The camp is open to boys and girls going into first through eighth grade and ran Tuesday through Thursday.

The participants were split into groups based on age and rotated around to different stations of drills. Each drill was run by several high school players.

Homan's hope for the camp is to keep young players interest in the sport into the high school level as well as their interest in attending games during the season.

"Most of these kids have played or

do play and I work with them to try to just keep the interest going," he said. "When the younger kids come to games on Friday nights, they know who they're cheering for. They've met some of the players and it gives them a little more vested interest to come watch us play."

It also gives the high school players a chance to see the game from a coaching perspective.

"It's great for the high school kids to kind of teach the younger kids what to do," Homan said. "Instead of the coaches always telling them what to do, they have to teach it to somebody and process it differently than they would if we were just telling them."

PHOTOS BY ELYSE BRIGHTMAN/ FOR THE PLAIN TALK
Vermillion youth participated in a three day football camp hosted by the Vermillion High School football team. The camp was held Tuesday through Thursday on the practice fields behind the high school.



Legion Opens Season With Big Wins

BY ELYSE BRIGHTMAN
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Vermillion's Post 1 Legion baseball team opened its season by dismantling Elk Point-Jefferson Post 134 in a double header Tuesday night.

"Timely hitting, just getting guys in scoring position with less than two outs and then capitalizing on it, especially in the first one," said Vermillion head coach Jason Gault.

Post 1 sailed to a 14-1 victory in five innings in game one on 13 hits and five EPJ errors.

Ethan James pitched for Vermillion and allowed one run on only three hits and five strikeouts through five innings.

Jake Odens went 3-for-4 with three RBIs. Nate Robertson also drove in three runs. Travis Weber and Brandon Mockler both had two hits and two RBIs.

Lorin Gregg of Elk Point-Jefferson had two of the team's three hits with a double and a single. Jake Herrity recorded the loss.

Cole Anderson took the mound for Vermillion in game two that was slated for five innings. Vermillion went on to win 6-1 with two earned runs. Anderson allowed one run, two hits and struck out five for the win.

He also started the scoring in the first inning by coming home on a passed ball. Brandon Mockler then scored when Jack Brown reached on an error.

Joe Miller drove in Brown and Hunter Christopherson for two runs on a single later in the inning.

Mockler's single in the second and Christopherson's in the fourth plated two more in the game.

EPJ then capped off the scoring in the fifth with an RBI groundout for the 6-1 final.

Michael Murphy took the loss for EPJ.

"It was a good couple wins for us against a region op-



ELYSE BRIGHTMAN/ FOR THE PLAIN TALK
Vermillion's Travis Weber makes contact with a pitch in the Legion Post 1 season opening win against Elk Point-Jefferson Tuesday night at Prentis Park.

ponent," Gault said. "Both pitchers threw really good games (for us). Ethan was lights out. Cole struggled a little bit late but settled down."

Vermillion continues its season Saturday and Sunday at the South Sioux City Tournament at Klasey Park/Voss Field in South Sioux City, Nebraska. Game times are to be announced.

USD To Host Weber State In 2016 Home Opener

South Dakota football will play its 2016 home opener against Weber State on Sept. 10 inside the DakotaDome as part of a home-and-home series announced Tuesday. It will be the first meeting between the two programs since 1970 and the first to be played in Vermillion.

The game will be played one week following South Dakota's season opener against California in Berkeley. The Coyotes renew their rivalry with North Dakota in Grand Forks the week after hosting Weber State which will conclude non-conference play in 2016.

The Weber State Wildcats, located in Ogden, Utah, are under the direction of head coach Jay Hill, a long-time assistant coach at the University of Utah. Weber State was 2-10 overall and 2-6 in the Big Sky in 2014

– the team's first season under Hill. The Wildcats made back-to-back trips to the FCS playoffs in 2008 and 2009, but have won two games in each of their last three seasons.

South Dakota and Weber State played to a 21-21 tie in Ogden on Nov. 21, 1970, in the only meeting between the two teams. South Dakota alum Steve Pelot ran for 134 yards and three touchdowns in a game that the Coyotes led 21-0 at halftime. South Dakota quarterback Tom Engleman passed for 100 yards and ran for 52 more in front of 3,700 in attendance.

The Coyotes are scheduled to host North Dakota on Sept. 16, 2017. South Dakota will return to Ogden to face Weber State on Sept. 15, 2018. Go to GoYotes.com for more information on future schedules.

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