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USD coach Amy Williams applauds the team's fans following a first-round game in the NCAA women's college basketball tournament against Stanford in Ames, IA on Saturday. Stanford defeated the Coyotes 81-62.

(Photo by Nati Harik/Associated Press)

Stanford 81, USD 62

Coyote Nation responds

By Jeremy Hoeck jeremy.hoeck@yankton.net

AMES, IA — Regan Specht said she was "lucky." Jim Abbott said it is "human nature to like winners." And Kim Grieve called it "life-changing" for students.

Together, each person affiliated with the University of South Dakota had the same takeaway from Saturday's women's basketball game at the NCAA Tournament in Ames: The exposure figures to benefit not only Coyote athletics, but the entire university.

Specht, a freshman from Yankton, had previously traveled to basketball road games this season, but said being at the NCAA Tournament — and on national television, to boot — was an experience she won't forget. "I'm really lucky," she said before Saturday's

game with Stanford at Hilton Coliseum. "This is the first time for all of us. "I guess I came here at the right time." USD's cheerleaders had previously traveled to Sioux Falls and Rapid City (where USD moved home games), as well as the Summit League tournament in Sioux Falls earlier this month. Ames, however, was a whole different situation, Specht said.

"This is very overwhelming," she said, looking around Hilton. "It's one of those things like, 'Oh my gosh, ESPN is here, and we're going out there.'" There was a similar sensation from the crowd of nearly 1,000 USD fans in the stands Saturday, according to USD president Jim Abbott. The Coyotes were making their first-ever

tournament appearance in their second season of eligibility at the Division I level. "This is a situation where you pay your dues during the transition," Abbott said at halftime of the game, which USD eventually lost 81-62. "I couldn't be happier for Amy (Williams) and her players."

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State, local races take shape

By Travis Gulbrandson travis.gulbrandson@plaintalk.net

The candidates for the June 3 city and county elections and the state primaries have been announced. Running for mayor are incumbent John (Jack) Powell and Stan Peterson. Candidates for Central Ward alderman are Katherine Price and Jennifer French. Incumbent John Grayson is not seeking re-election. Northeast Ward candidates are Sarah Bye and Holly Meins. Current Northeast Ward Alderman Kent Osborne is not seeking another term. Southeast Ward candidates are incumbent Dennis Zimmerman, Dennis Holland and Kris O'Connor. Parker Erickson is running unopposed for the Northwest Ward alderman position. Alderman Tom

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Ames trip part of Coyotes' amazing ride

By David Lias david.lias@plaintalk.net

The amazing ride that the South Dakota Coyotes women basketball team has been on this season continued last Thursday — literally — when their bus pulled out of the DakotaDome parking lot headed towards Ames, IA. The final destination for the team was Hilton Coliseum, the home of the Iowa State Cyclones, where the #15-ranked Coyotes faced the #2-ranked Sanford Cardinal in the preliminary round of the 2014 NCAA Division I Women's Basketball Tournament. It's a journey that sophomore Tia Hemiller of Watertown, a guard on the Coyote team, was eager to begin to last week. "We've been waiting for this day for a long time," she said, the bus idling in the background as staff and teammates loaded equipment into its luggage bays. "All of this excitement to send us off to go play — it's a pretty awesome feeling," she said. "We can't wait to get down there and get settled in, and go through the



Sen. John Thune informally chats with members of the USD women's basketball team after they finished loading their bags and equipment on the team bus at the DakotaDome late Thursday morning, March 20. (Photo by David Lias)

scouting report and go out and play." The excitement Hemiller referred to included dozens of people who strolled from inside

the DakotaDome to the bus at the parking lot. Among the crowd was U.S. Sen. John Thune, a graduate of USD, who returned to his alma mater to

meet the team personally and wish them well.

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