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University of South Dakota basketball players Tia Hemiller (4, left) and Brandon Bos (12) are ready to get after it this weekend which tips off the Summit League Tournament at the Sioux Falls Sports Arena. The Coyote women are seeded No. 1 and open up tournament play Saturday at noon against Fort Wayne. The USD men are the tournament's fifth-seed and are set to battle Fort Wayne Sunday at 6 p.m.

THOMAS HATZENBUHLER / FOR THE PLAIN TALK

Time To Climb Summit

USD WOMEN ARE TOURNAMENT'S TOP SEED; TAKE THE FLOOR SATURDAY AT NOON

By **Jeremy Hoeck**
Press & Dakotan

Out of the many taglines and mottos used by her program throughout the season, Amy Williams has liked to use "sustained success."

The goal was simple: Be more consistent through the conference season and avoid the up-and-down nature of last year.

Mission accomplished for the University of South Dakota women's basketball team. The Coyotes (23-6, 13-3) captured the Summit League regular season title on Saturday and will enter this weekend's tournament as the No. 1 seed.

Having won the championship and reached the NCAA Tournament a season ago, the players made sure to never lost sight of that start-to-finish consistency, according to sophomore Bridget Arens.

"We had that feeling of last year," Arens, a Crofton, Nebraska native, said, "and we wanted that feeling from the get-go, that was our thought process."

"It wasn't like that all the time, but we still got it."

There was plenty of talk in the pre-season and even throughout the non-conference games about USD wanting to avoid the fate of the previous two seasons.

- In 2012-13, the Coyotes at one point lost four of five Summit Leagues games, but then won their final three to finish 10-6. They then advanced to the tournament title game, losing by three points to South Dakota State.

- In 2013-14, the Coyotes started 0-4 in league play, finished 7-7, but won the championship.

There were no such concerns this season, however.

South Dakota suffered only three losses in league play, all on the road (to Oral Roberts, IUPUI and SDSU), finishing the regular season a perfect 14-0 at the DakotaDome.

"We made it our goal to have a lot more sustained success, and not have those dips and lulls," Williams said Saturday. "There were a couple games where we felt let get away from us."

"But we really took care of business." Particularly down the stretch.

After a 10-point loss in Brookings, USD's lead in the conference race was down to one game over SDSU, meaning the Coyotes needed to sweep their final

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COYOTE MEN ENTER TOURNERY ON HEELS OF STRONG RUN INCLUDING WIN OVER SDSU IN FINALE

By **Jeremy Hoeck**
Press & Dakotan

Craig Smith has made clear since day one of his tenure at the University of South Dakota that he intends to guide the men's basketball program to the NCAA Tournament.

And, as he and his players have maintained all season, sooner rather than later.

"I know it's a really lofty goal, we fully understand that, but our guys believe it, and we believe it," said Smith, who was hired away from Nebraska — where he helped guide the Huskers to the 'Big Dance.'

"I'd rather be a good team playing great than a great team playing good. And I'm not sure where exactly we're at in there."

Where are the Coyotes (16-15)? They enter the Summit League Tournament as the No. 5 seed, where they will face Fort Wayne on Sunday night at 6 p.m. in Sioux Falls, in a field many see as wide open.

Not that the Coyotes are altogether concerned about their projection.

"We were picked to finish eighth, so we don't really care about seeding or any of that," senior Tyler Larson said. "We're going to try to get to the championship game."

Doing that as a No. 5 seed will understandably be a challenge, but the Coyotes have been quick to point out they've beaten every other tournament team this season — splitting with six and sweeping Western Illinois.

"We know we're capable of beating everybody if we play a certain way, with a chip on our shoulder and an unselfishness," Smith said. "When we do those kinds of things, with a defensive mindset, we can hang with anybody."

And the Coyotes have.

South Dakota State, the top seed, is coming off a sluggish performance at USD, while No. 2 North Dakota State needed overtime to win both games over Denver, its opponent in the first round.

The Coyotes also won at Oral Roberts, the No. 3 seed, in a performance ORU coach Scott Sutton publicly called his program's "worst loss" in 14 years. South Dakota then later lost at home by 18 points to Denver, the No. 7 seed.

A 16-point home win Saturday over

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Senior Day Lifts Vermillion Boys into Regional Basketball Playoffs



Vermillion Tanager Carter Andre (33) attacks the rim against Canton last week on Senior Night.

THOMAS HATZENBUHLER / FOR THE PLAIN TALK

By **Alan Dale**
The Plain Talk

On Thursday night the Vermillion High Tanagers played host to a Region 4A Boys' basketball tournament quarterfinal against Canton High School.

The result wasn't available at press time so please check www.plaintalk.net for a full recap of the contest.

In the event the Tanagers won they would travel for a Saturday semifinal against No. 3 Tea at 7 p.m. or they would host No. 6 Beresford, also at 7 p.m.

A loss would end Vermillion's season.

Here's a look at their final game of the 2014-2015 regular season:

Tanagers Use Hot Shooting to Blow Past Canton

A Three Musketeers' candy bar may taste good, but the Vermillion High Tanagers' Four Musketeers are sweeter.

They sure were last Friday night as the Tanager boys' basketball team was just as nectar as can be as they dropped 13 three-point shots in the eyes of the Canton C-Hawks en route to an important 66-49 home victory to wrap up the regular season.

The win — sparked by four double-figure scorers — gave

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Senior Vermillion Tanager Jefferson Galvin (32) and his teammates hoped for a big playoff run as Regional play tipped off.

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