



## Take Seven With Kara Iverson

VERMILLION — Following a foot injury that sidelined her for half of last season, Kara Iverson closed her junior season on a high note.

The Yankton native started nine games for the University of South Dakota women's basketball team last season and averaged 6.2 points and 2.9 rebounds in 17 total games.

Now, as a senior, the 6-foot-1 forward has eyes on closing out her college career on the right note.

She spoke with the *Press & Dakotan's* Jeremy Hoeck this week.

**Coming off the injury last season, how excited were you to get back on the court?**

I was really excited. It took a little longer than expected, so I was more than ready to get back at it. I was tough not being able to play.

**Overall, what were your impressions of last season?**

I thought we ended strong. We got a couple of those Division wins that we needed, and that'll help out with some of the bigger games. We know what to expect and how to win.

**What do you remember most about the North Carolina game?**

(laughs) Going into halftime when we were up big, we were kind of in shock. (USD led the 11th-ranked Tar Heels 41-32). It was such an exciting game. It all happened really fast.

**What did you learn about Division I basketball?**

The intensity is on a whole different level. You have to come out ready to play every night. If you're not, teams will take advantage of that.

**How has preseason practice been going?**

It's been going really well. We're just sharpening everything up, getting any kinks out, and working on our chemistry. I know we're all anxious to play in a real game.

**What do you expect from the Coyotes this season?**

There are definitely a lot of new faces, but we have a strong core coming back. We've got great returners who know the system, know our style of play. And it's fun helping the new girls.

**What are you most anxious for?**

Oh man, definitely the State-U game (Feb. 15, 2010 in Brookings). And having the Great West Conference finally set; we're really looking for that championship. Those would be two huge things we're looking forward to.

# Hegge Anxious To Return To Coyote Lineup



Crofton, Neb., native Amber Hegge returns to the Coyote lineup after sitting out the 2008-09 season as a redshirt.

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Five hundred ninety-four days.

That's how long it will have been between when Amber Hegge last wore a women's basketball uniform at South Dakota to when she first gets to put one on again, Nov. 11 for an exhibition with Winona State.

In that time, USD has gone from the NCAA Division II national championship game to a NCAA Division I squad that will play its first full D-I schedule this season. It's gone from the now-defunct North Central Conference to the brand new Great West Conference, but has already been accepted into the fully-established Summit League.

And now, the Crofton, Neb., native is more than ready to get back into the game.

"It's been pretty tough," Hegge said. "But I'm glad now that it's over."

Hegge took a redshirt year in 2008-09, the first year of USD's transition to Division I. The move made sense, giving the team's second-leading returning scorer off the '08 national runner-up team a chance to play three years in Division I instead of using one to play the piecemeal schedule that all first-year transition teams are forced to play.

But Hegge still practiced with the team, worked out in the weight room and helped the USD women's indoor track and field team win the Great West title in 2009. To keep her focus with basketball, Hegge tried to bring the same intensity to practice that she brought to games.

"I had to treat practice every day as a competition," she said.

"I took practice more seriously." One thing that then first-year coach Ryan Williams did was work with Hegge in the post. Despite her 6-1 frame, the inside game was fairly new to her.

"It's not a place I usually played at," she said. Hegge was a four-year starter at guard at Crofton. "Last year, going against (former starting center) Bridget Yoerger in practice taught me a lot. I got more comfortable on the block."

The work doesn't mean she's going to go from a point guard to a center, but her work does give the Coyotes flexibility with their lineup.

"It will depend on the personnel," she said. "You will see me inside, outside, both... whatever helps the team in a situation."

Williams feels that Hegge has begun the transition from being a role player to a key contributor.

"I anticipate her definitely being a go-to kid for us. We'll give her a lot of looks," he said. "She's learning to score the ball and be that key kid. That'll take time."

The Coyotes have undergone plenty of changes since Hegge last stepped out on the floor. Williams, a USD grad who took Wayne State to the same NCAA regional the Coyotes hosted, is now in his second year at the helm. A couple of his top players followed him to Vermillion, former Roosevelt standout Teresa Case and 6-4 post Jodie Boss. Minnesota native Jackie Hiebert left Ohio University for USD.

The Coyotes have also had a couple good recruiting classes, the first of which included Hegge's good friend, Vermillion native Annie Roche.

With all the change, Hegge

says the transition has gone well.

"I expected it to take more time, but it seems to me like we're coming together," she said. "Obviously there are a lot of new faces, and that will take some getting used to."

Besides the changes on the floor, there are changes in the schedule. USD has gone from playing Augustana and Minnesota State-Mankato to places like Nebraska and Iowa State. But Hegge warns that the Coyotes can't look past anyone on their schedule.

"We can't get too far ahead of ourselves," she said. "We can't be thinking about February yet. We have to take it game by game."

Among the eight games in February — six of which are in Great West play — is a non-conference game in the middle of the month against an old NCC rival, South Dakota State. But Hegge noted that there are 22 regular season games to focus on before Feb. 15.

"We can't look forward to the big games too much," she said.

What Hegge has seen in practice is an exciting team, ready for its first full Division I schedule.

"Hopefully you'll see a team with a lot of enthusiasm, that gets after it," she said. "We're a team that works hard to do things right, that plays their hardest every night."

And, after her 594-day absence, Hegge hopes fans see a young woman who has continued to build on her game.

"Hopefully I'll snap back to where things left off," she said. "I'm definitely really excited for it."

"Hopefully it will all go well."

## Take Seven With Jackie Hiebert

VERMILLION — It's been 20 months since Jackie Hiebert has played in an official basketball game.

And the way the Maple Grove, Minn. native tells it, she's more than ready to take the floor again.

Hiebert, a transfer from Division I Ohio University following the 2007-08 season, redshirted with the University of South Dakota women's basketball team last season.

Yet now, the 6-foot sophomore is preparing to join the Coyotes for the 2009-10 season, which begins with an exhibition game against Winona State on Nov. 11 in Yankton.

She spoke with the *Press & Dakotan's* Jeremy Hoeck this week.

**First of all, what brought you to USD?**

I found out about USD while watching the (2007-08 Division II) national championship game on ESPN. I was looking to switch schools, and I liked the way they played. It looked like something I wanted to be apart of. Plus, it was closer to home, and that's what I wanted.

**What about USD surprised you the most?**

Actually, I was glad I wasn't surprised (laughs). I was

impressed right away with the coaches. I got along well with all of them. There was great chemistry right away.

**How hard was it to sit out last season?**

Yeah, it was really hard. It's been worth it, for sure. I had a chance to learn the system and get to know the girls.

**What did you learn about Division I basketball?**

At this level, everyone can shoot the ball. You have to be ready to contest everything, from the outside shot to the drive. The level of quickness is a lot faster.

**How has preseason practice been going?**

It's been great, actually. Everyone's playing well together and trying to become a better team. We spend a lot of time off the court, so that really helps.

**What do you expect from the Coyotes this season?**

I think we'll be very competitive. I'm so anxious to finally play (laughs). We want to get out and compete.

**What are you most anxious for?**

Just the chance to play against someone else besides my teammates (laughs). That can get old really quick. I'm excited to actually guard someone else.



Hiebert

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Coyotes bring into the program, three will see time this season, Williams said.

Pamela January (Richfield, Minn.) brings a physical presence to USD's already-talented guard corp, while Sam Mehr (Apple Valley, Minn.) gives the Coyotes a "sniper" from the outside, Williams said. The third, Emily Guenther (Altoona, Iowa), provides yet another low post threat.

"We'll have a lot of different looks and a ton of versatility with our lineups," Williams said. "We've got posts who can handle it or shoot it, and guards who can play inside."

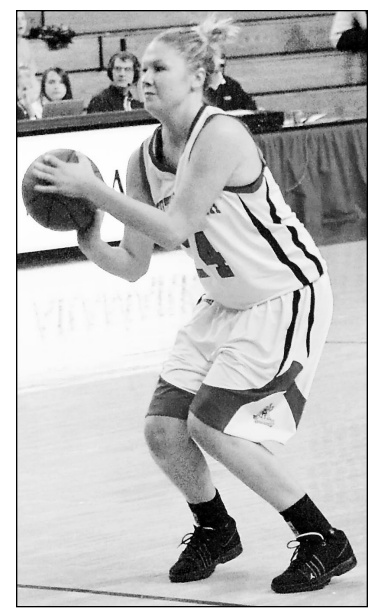
Transfers Alexis Yackley (Iowa State) and Jodie Boss

(Wayne State), along with Alicia Brown (Vermillion) and McKayla Knudson (South Sioux City, Neb.) will redshirt this season.

The Coyotes kick off the 2009-10 campaign with a Nov. 11 exhibition against Winona State in Yankton at Laddie E. Cimpl Arena.

"It's a great opportunity to get over there," Williams said. "With Iverson (Yankton) and Hegge (Crofton, Neb.), it makes really good sense. We have a great relationship with Mount Marty, and we're excited to bring our team over there."

USD's regular season opener will be held Nov. 15 against Wisconsin-Green Bay at the Sioux Falls Arena.



Kara Iverson started the final nine games in 2008-09.

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