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## Tanager soccer players earn accolades for 2014 performances

By Alan Dale  
The Plain Talk

Vermillion High School juniors Autumn Barnett and Natasha Samudzi were recently named to the South Dakota 2014 Elite Eleven A Girls soccer team as selected by the Soccer605.

Samudzi was also named to the all-state 1st team as selected by Class A coaches while midfielder/defender Sowmya Ragothaman and center back Cheyenne Mallory earned 2nd team recognition.

"I am pleased that we had four girls get recognized for their achievements this season with post-season honors," Vermillion head coach Shannon Fitzsimmons said. "I am even more excited that we have each of those girls back next fall. These honors are a reflection of their hard work and commitment season. They are each deserving of their honors.

The girls played pivotal roles for the Tanagers which ended its season in

the Class A state semifinals, losing to St. Thomas More, to wrap up a 6-4-2 campaign in the program's first as a sanctioned sport.

Barnett was a midfielder for the Tanagers and was noted for her ability to dictate play in the midfield with a solid first touch and physical prowess.

"I am really excited because I wasn't expecting it," Barnett said. "I was really surprised, but excited that I got it with Tasha. I've been playing since I was a little kid and I always wanted to play in high school because I looked up to the older girls. Then I gradually started playing with a club team and I really like it a lot. This is where it got me."

Barnett says she has received recruiting letters from a handful of colleges outside and inside the state.

High scoring forward Samudzi led the Tanagers in scoring as she constantly put opposing defenses under duress with her



Natalie Samudzi of the Vermillion High School Tanagers earned first team all-state honors and Elite 11 recognition for her play this season.

FILE PHOTO

exceptional speed. Her play has definitely boosted her profile for potentially continuing her career at the next level.

Samudzi finished with 12 goals for the Tanagers. "It's really good and it really helps when college coaches are looking at your profile and what you achieved," Samudzi said. "I didn't really expect it

because there were a lot of talented girls in Class A. So when we saw our names it was like 'what the heck, this is awesome.'"

With each of the ladies returning along with a majority of the Tanagers' roster, both players expect big things in 2015.

"We are really looking forward to next season because we were very



Midfielder Autumn Barnett was selected as a member of the Class A 'Elite 11' team as chosen by Soccer605.

FILE PHOTO

young, losing only three seniors," Samudzi said. "We are a strong team with our whole defensive line back, but we do lose our goalie. We will regroup and be stronger."

"The other teams lost a

lot more seniors and we are going to have eight next year," Barnett said. "It can't be a couple of teammates, it's got to be whole team that comes to play hard and works together."

## Coyote Hoops Tip-off

USD men welcome Coach Smith to lead program in 2014-15

By Alan Dale  
The Plain Talk

With change comes high expectations in many cases.

For the University of South Dakota men's basketball team, change could begin as early as Friday when the Coyotes kick off the 2014-15 season under the leadership of new head coach Craig Smith.

They will soon find out how the early stages of a basketball facelift have gone when they open up play against Utah Valley State in Orem, Utah. Two days later they will take on Pac-12 squad Stanford, fresh off a Sweet 16 appearance in last year's NCAA Tournament.

It's a different view from the top of a Division I program for Smith who spent two years as Tim Miles' assistant at Nebraska where the new Coyote head man helped engineer the magical Cornhusker turnaround last season.

Smith was the NAIA Division II National Coach of the Year in 2007 at Mayville State, which he led to three consecutive national tournaments including that season's national title game.

That could definitely help as he begins the process of improving USD from its 12-18 and 6-8 mark in 2013-14.



South Dakota Coyotes' men's basketball welcome eight newcomers to go along with eight veterans like senior guard Brandon Bos (12).

FILE PHOTO

postseason appearance streak to four years and reached the apex with last year's first-round NCAA exit at national powers, Stanford.

Prior to that, Williams guided the Coyotes to a 19-16 mark and the semifinals of the Women's Basketball Invitational.

Now as 2014-15 beckons with this weekend's opener and four games in seven-days to tip off the campaign, the USD women may expect more than ever as all but one player returns as last year's Summit League Tournament champions.

They tip things off Friday night in Des Moines



Natalie Seekamp (35) and the USD women's basketball team will try to improve on back-to-back 19-win seasons and last year's trip to the NCAA tournament behind improved defense.

FILE PHOTO

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Women to emphasize defense for title run

By Alan Dale  
The Plain Talk

Quite the story has been developed by Amy Williams for such a short time in Vermillion.

Entering her third season as the head women's basketball coach at the University of South Dakota, Williams has already found a way to take the Coyotes from the middle of the Summit League scrum to the heights of the NCAA Tournament.

The third-year coach has already built on a solid foundation she inherited as the Coyotes increased their

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Yankton High School, in red, will take on Brookings Friday night for the Class 11AA state football title at the DakotaDome. Kickoff is at 7:30 p.m.

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## Descending on the Dome: State football finals set for center stage

Seven championships will be on the line when the South Dakota High School football finals invaded the DakotaDome, which began on Thursday and run through Saturday.

Three titles will be decided on Thursday and Friday, with the Class 11AAA game set for Saturday night.

Thursday play began with the Class 9A final between unbeaten Wolsey-Wessington (11-0) and Howard (11-0), a 10:30 a.m. start. Unbeaten Gregory (11-0) took on Woonsocket-Wessington Springs-Sanborn Central (10-1), which made its first

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## USD football hosts potent Redbirds in home finale

they play the high-octane Illinois State Redbirds (8-1, 5-1) in the Coyotes' home finale at the DakotaDome.

So 2-13 and 0-10 in league play since their last MVFC win has Coyote head coach Joe Glenn scratching his head as his third season at the helm of his alma mater's football program creeps to a close.

"I feel bad that we can't get games closed down, but we aren't quite as good as the teams we are playing right now," Glenn said. "We are fighting hard right now, but just can't seem to make the plays the other teams are making right now. We need to get better."

The fact remains that the USD (2-8, 0-6) schedule has been unkind to a program that is still in the kindergarten stages of its Division I maturation. Consider that the

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