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USD hopes to halt skid vs. Jackrabbits

By Alan Dale
The Plain Talk

It is a cliché, but it is what it is.

One more game offers a final chance at a victory in Missouri Valley Football Conference (MVFC) play this season and the University of South Dakota Coyotes are hoping they can break through.

That chance comes Saturday in Brookings

when USD (2-9, 0-7) takes on their arch-rivals South Dakota State University at 2 p.m.

Not only does this final game offer USD a last hope of avoiding being the only MVFC team not to record a win this season in league play, it would also end an 11-game losing streak in conference action, and provide solace in gaining a victory over their greatest nemesis.

It won't be easy, according to USD head coach Joe Glenn.

"They are hitting on all eight cylinders right now and are doing a good job right now," Glenn said. "They have the best running back in the country at our level (Zach Zenner).

"They found themselves late and I think they have to get a win to get into the playoffs or to at least

solidify a spot, so they will be tough."

SDSU (7-4, 4-3) have won consecutive contests to get back into the Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) playoff talk. They defeated Indiana State in Terre Haute two weekends ago and come into the USD game on the heels of a 59-24 demolition of Western Illinois.

"Now that they got Zenner back and they are

balanced," Glenn said. "They will throw it but they will get him the ball and get him touches. They are a complete team."

A game like this could also make a difference in terms of recruiting as the two biggest football playing universities battle off the gridiron in search of the state and region's top talent.

■ HALT, Page 2B

Four Tangers earn Dak XII football honors

Four members of the Vermillion Tanager football squad were selected as Dakota XII All-Conference team members the league announced Saturday.

Seniors Regan Bye (RB/LB), Tyler Madsen (RB/LB), and Brandon Hertz (OG/DE) and junior Matt Ouellette (WR/CB) represent the Tanagers for top league honors after helping the squad to a 5-5 season which included a second consecutive Class 11A quarterfinal appearance.

Senior Jason Retzlaff (OG/NG) and junior Mitchell Sand (OG/DT) were given honorable mention consideration for the Tanagers which had the best record for the program since 2008 when the team went 5-5 as well.

"They are all well deserving of the honor," Vermillion head coach Andy Homan said. "Every one of them played to the last whistle. A coach could only hope that more of his players that did the same could get the honors as well."

- The Plain Talk

Hoping to reach the 'Summit'

No. 3 Coyotes' Volleyball opens league tourney play Friday evening against Fort Wayne

By Alan Dale
The Plain Talk

They had a shot to be the top seed at this year's Summit League Volleyball Tournament beginning this weekend in Indianapolis, but the University of South Dakota Coyotes could still be perfectly fine in their pursuit of an NCAA Tournament bid.

Following their disappointing 3-2 (25-18, 25-23, 23-25, 20-25, 15-11) loss to IUPUI Sunday afternoon in the Coyote Den, the Coyotes (18-11, 12-4) fell to third-place behind the victors and the University of Denver in the final standings.

That set up USD with a first round date against sixth-seeded Fort Wayne (13-19, 7-9) and a 7 p.m. tip-off on the campus of IUPUI.

The loss to IUPUI also ended a 17-match, Coyote home win streak against Summit League opponents.

"We are definitely disappointed that the streak is ended, but we now have the ability to bounce back from adversity," USD head coach Leanne Williamson said. "Our team has done a great job of this throughout the season, and that is why I am so confident that we will come back even stronger."

Coming into the tournament the squad better its Summit League performance from nine to 12 wins (albeit with two more matches on the docket) and is one win away from equalling last year's total of 19.

"I do think we have made improvements from last year, and I believe that some of our wins prove that," Williamson said. "This group of ladies is the true definition



Kelsey Biltoft (13) and the University of South Dakota volleyball team begins its journey toward a hoped for NCAA Tournament bid Friday when they take on Fort Wayne in Indianapolis. USD is 18-11 overall and are the tournament's third seed.

THOMAS HATZENBUHLER / FOR THE PLAIN TALK

of a team, and that has helped us work extremely hard every day in practice. As a team, we are working on becoming even more consistent, especially if the team goes on a run."

Not only did they have key wins over squads like power conference representatives Creighton, Arkansas, and Colorado, but they battled it out through very competitive Summit waters.

Something she expects once again this weekend.

"The Summit league allows us to play a very difficult schedule each week, so teams are going to make runs on you," Williamson said. "We need to limit the runs and stay confident in those moments."

Despite the loss to IUPUI, Williamson is confident about her squad's ability to win three matches in three days and earn a spot to the

Big Dance.

"I feel really good going into the tournament," Williamson said. "We have learned a lot this season with both our wins and losses, and I believe these lessons have prepared us for this weekend. We are focusing on one match at a time."

"IPFW is a strong opponent and we are excited to play such a strong team right away. We need to focus on controlling the tempo on

our side of the floor. This starts with the serve/pass battle and continues with our defensive mentality. If we can do this, we will have some great matches this weekend."

Regardless if they win the tournament or not, the 2014 edition of USD volleyball has shined bright in Vermillion.

They just want it to glow

■ SUMMIT, Page 2B

USD harrier Eichkorn headed to NCAAs

PEORIA, Ill.--Behind junior Amber Eichkorn's individual 10th-place finish at the NCAA Midwest Regional meet on Friday, the South Dakota women outperformed their 10th-place ranking to finish seventh, the team's highest since their 14th-place finish in 2012. The Coyote men finished 19th.

Eichkorn would later qualify as a wildcard as the first ever Coyote to make the NCAA Division I Cross Country Championships.

Eichkorn will race at the NCAA Division I National Championships in Terre Haute, Ind. The women's 6k will take place at 11 a.m. (CST) on Saturday. A live webcast will be available on NCAA.com.

"We are definitely a program on the rise," said head coach Dan Fitzsimmons. "On the women's side we finished not too far out of the money, and with everyone returning next year we hope to crack the top five and be in the conversation for the national meet."

Eichkorn crossed the finish line in a new career best time of 20 minutes, 30.2 seconds for 6,000 meters. The Wichita, Kan., native ran with the chase pack throughout the race, while UMKC's Courtney Frerichs was the eventual winner of the women's race in 19:58.7. Eichkorn's 10th-place finish is the highest finish by a Coyote at the regional meet and earned her all-region honors for finishing in the top 25.

Continuing as South Dakota's second runner across the line, junior Katie Wetzstein ran a new career best time of 20:59.0 for 32nd place.

Freshman Bethany Kozak and junior Kelsey Barrett finished together in 52nd and 53rd, respectively.

■ EICHKORN, Page 3B

USD women split first two games; open home slate Monday

By Alan Dale
The Plain Talk

With just 24 hours to get ready for another road trip after having just completed a three-day one, University of South Dakota women's basketball coach Amy Williams had enough time to reflect a moment on her team's opening weekend of play.

The Coyotes (1-1) opened up the new campaign with an 83-78 win last Friday at Drake before falling two days later at the University of Kansas, 68-60 (see stories below).

It was back to Vermillion for a pit stop before the USD women were back on the road, this time to the left coast as they prepared for Wednesday night's game at Portland State and a trip to Pac-12 squad Washington the next night. See stories on both games on www.plaintalk.net.

They had plenty to build off of following their trip

to Des Moines and Lawrence, Kansas.

"We're happy to open with a win at Drake because it was a tough, hard-fought game in a difficult environment," Williams said. "For us to buckle down and keep our composure for a big road win was nice. We were disappointed at Kansas because we didn't finish very well. They pulled us out of what we wanted to do offensively. We had six assists and 19 turnovers and that's not the way we want to play the game, but you have to give credit to Kansas. They really pressured us and got up in us so we know that is something we have to work on."

One thing Williams emphasized in the preseason was an improvement in defense. The coach saw some early signs of improvement in that area, albeit there is still plenty of work left to do.

"Drake came out and

had 21 points in the first 4-5 minutes so what I was thinking was that we needed to do two weeks of camp for that," she admitted. "We kind of settled in and when we needed the stops down the stretch we got the stops. We knew it would be a work in progress and we knew we wouldn't be 100 percent where we wanted our defense to be at, but we did exploit some of the areas we needed to and we just hope to continue to get better."

When they return home the women will get to bask in the warmth of the DakotaDome when they open their home slate Monday night against UC-Irvine. Tip-off is scheduled for 7 p.m.

"I haven't even allowed myself to think about that game yet, we are going one game, one road trip at a time," Williams said. "We will be happy to be back

■ WOMEN, Page 2B



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