

## Leber Named To All-State

Alec Leber played almost every minute of every game in his high school career for the Vermillion boys' soccer team and last week he was recognized by the South Dakota High School Soccer Coaches Association as a first-team All-State selection.

"Alec was a four year varsity starter and has played almost full time in every game the last four years," said Vermillion High School head coach Curt Nelson.

The defenseman earned his starting spot as a freshman during the team's 2011 state championship run and has held it ever since.

The senior captain continued as a mainstay for the Tanagers back line this season by using his speed to shut down the opposing team's attack and winning any air ball that came in his direction.

"Alec is an extremely tough and hard-working player who pushes himself and his teammate's every day," Nelson said. "It was great having someone who challenged everyone to work hard day in and day out."

Boys Class A All-State  
First Team: Logan Aukes, 11, midfield, Sioux Falls Christian; Levi DeWitt, 11, forward, Sioux Falls Christian; Alec Hohn-Mack, 11, defense, Tea Area; Joy Nay Htoo, 12, midfield, Groton Area; Luke Julian, 11, midfield, St. Thomas More; Alec Leber, 12, defense, Vermillion; Cody McConville, 12, midfield, Belle Fourche; Edgar Meza, 11, defense, Spearfish; Isia Rodriguez, 12, forward, Spearfish; Joey Ten Napel, 12, midfield, Sioux Falls Christian; Nate Terveen, 12, defense, Spearfish; Adam Trimble, 12, midfield, Belle Fourche; Andrew Unruh, 11, goalkeeper, Sioux Falls Christian; Tim Wager, 12, forward, James Valley Christian; Jayden Waldner, 12, defense, James Valley Christian.

Boys Class A All-State  
Second Team: Dalton Bodewitz, 10, forward, Freeman Academy; Jacob Burr, 11, goalkeeper, Spearfish; Brady Evans, 10, defense, St. Thomas More; Colby Fechner, 9, forward, Tea Area; Carson Gehman, 10, Midfield, Hot Springs; Brennan Haggerty, 10, midfield, Freeman Academy; Ryan Haggerty, 12, midfield, Freeman; Spencer Lund, 9, forward, St. Thomas More; Ty Pulscher, 11, defense, Hot Springs; Bennet Rasmussen, 10, midfield, Tea Area; Daniel Stahl, 12, defense, James Valley Christian; James Thompson, 12, midfield, Groton Area; Lucas Trimble, 11, forward, Belle Fourche; Lane Weig, 12, defense, Groton Area; Natasha Woepfle, 12, Hot Springs.

# Fischbach Looking For Third Straight National Championship

BY ELYSE BRIGHTMAN  
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When Vermillion's Dylan Fischbach was offered a spot on the University of Wisconsin, Whitewater men's wheelchair basketball team his mind was made up.

"It's basically the Kentucky of wheelchair basketball, so the second I got an offer from them there was no looking back and I've been committed to this team and the program since day one," he said.

This year, the point guard will return for his junior season as the Warhawks look to win its third straight national championship.

Last season, UWW beat the University of Illinois 68-55 for the national title, and in 2014, defeated the University of Texas, Arlington 55-54.

"We're hoping to keep the streak alive and get the 3-peat," Fischbach said. "There are a lot of good teams out there. A lot of people are doubting us, saying there are two other teams in the division right now that are better than us. I'm really excited to prove them wrong. I'm going to do everything I can to show them that there's a reason we are back-to-back nations champs."

Fischbach went to UWW as a top recruit his senior year of high school after being spotted attending summer camps and playing with his junior level team. With the lack of wheelchair basketball teams in Vermillion, and the entire state of South Dakota, Fischbach travel to Omaha, Nebraska to play for the Omaha Red Dawgs. Since joining the UWW team, he has played a crucial role in the Warhawks offense.

"Dylan is in our starting line-up and he plays quite a bit," said UWW head coach Jeremy Lade. "Dylan probably falls under

the shooting guard category. His ability to knock down shots from the outside is definitely his strength."

So far this season, Fischbach has scored 32 points in the team's first three games in Marshall, Minnesota. UWW beat the University of Illinois 69-41 and Southwest Minnesota State University 58-32 on Oct. 23 and the University of Missouri 65-52 on Oct. 24.

"Our offense is looking good, our defense is playing pretty well," Fischbach said. "We still have some things to work on, but as of right now I like where our team is. I think our coach does as well."

According to Lade, Fischbach is stepping into a big leadership role this season as one of the team veterans.

"We are excited about developing his leadership skills. He went from being a young kid in our program to growing up and providing some of our senior leadership," Lade said.

Fischbach also knows he will be looked at as one of the more seasoned players on the team.

"As a junior here, with some guys that I've played with my whole career here, they kind of look to me as one of our leaders and my coach looks to me to lead the guys out here and basically just run the offense, it's the biggest thing," he said.

The Warhawks season continues through March 12 with the next games on November 20-21 being the only home matchups of the season.

"We travel all over the country to play wheelchair basketball," Lade said. "There are nine teams in the men's division for wheelchair basketball. We travel as far away as Alabama, Texas and Pennsylvania to play wheelchair basketball."



COURTESY PHOTO  
Vermillion native Dylan Fischbach, 30, in action for the University of Wisconsin, Whitewater men's wheelchair basketball team in the Warhawks 62-49 win over Alabama last season.

## Coyotes Finish Den Era With Win Over SDSU

BY JEREMY HOECK  
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Kelsey Biltoft knows no other home court.

There is no sense of what used to be. She wasn't around when the University of South Dakota volleyball team used to play its home matches down on the DakotaDome floor.

To Biltoft, the appropriately-named Coyote Den – the second-floor location of home matches since 2012 – was exactly that: Her home. She won't be around when USD moves next door to its new 6,000-seat arena next fall.

"I definitely think it's so cool," said Biltoft, who was one of four seniors honored before Sunday afternoon's match against South Dakota State – won by the Coyotes 3-1 (19-25, 25-18, 25-16, 25-13).

"I would have loved to play in the arena, but I've loved the den. I've loved how close and in your face the crowd is."

The Coyotes had made the move upstairs during the summer of 2012, but it was more than simply laying out a wood floor. The administration and Dome staff had to haul up some bleachers (enough to seat a couple hundred fans) and other gameday equipment.

The decision to move paid off for the Coyotes, who finished their four-year stay at the Den with a 23-10 record.

With Sunday's match marking the end of that stay, in addition to it being Senior Day and a match with the rival Jackrabbits, the

Coyotes understandably came out a little shaky.

"It was the last game in the den, us seniors' last game at home, and I think everyone was a little nervous," Biltoft said. "Finally after that, we made the decision that, 'No, this is not OK.'"

South Dakota State used its aggressive serving and a .357 hitting percentage to win the first set, and even carried that over to early parts of the second set.

"We had a conversation after game one of just being sick of playing below our standards," USD coach Leanne Williamson said. "At some point, I think you have to make a decision that you're not going to do it anymore. You're in control of how you play."

What was the team's reaction? "They all looked at me and said, 'Yes, we're sick of this,'" Williamson said.

And so, the Coyotes turned the tide. They went on to hit .357 in the second set, .308 in the third set and .395 in the deciding fourth set to capture the victory – and in the process, exacting revenge on SDSU which had won the first meeting.

"Yeah, the tide did change on us," said SDSU hitter Mikala Hora, a Yankton native. She would finish with a team-high 24 kills on a team-high 42 swings.

"We came out and served really well; we were ready to play. Our serving got a little high and a little less aggressive," Hora added. "We fought hard, and that's all you

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## HS Football Playoffs Set For DakotaDome

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK  
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The 35th annual South Dakota state football finals begin on Thursday at the DakotaDome in Vermillion. Seven championships will be decided over the three-day event.

Play begins at 10:30 a.m. on Thursday, featuring Sully Buttes (10-1) and Canistota (11-0) in the Class 9A championship. Sully Buttes is making its first finals appearance since 1990, while Canistota returns for the first time since 2012.

The second game of the Thursday afternoon session, a scheduled 1:30 p.m. start, will feature Wolsey-Wessington (10-1) against Woonsocket-Wessington Springs-Sanborn Central (11-0), a battle of two teams from the 281 Conference, in the Class 9AA final. Both teams lost in state championship games in 2014, Wolsey-Wessington in 9A and WWSSC in 9AA. The teams met on Oct. 16, with WWSSC winning 20-6 in what was the lowest scoring output of the season for both teams.

The final game on Thursday, the Class 11A final, also features a pair of conference rivals, Madison (11-0) and West Central (10-1). Madison, which beat the Trojans 28-7 on Sept. 11, has lost in the 11A final each of the past two seasons. West Central is making its record 15th state finals appearance, a mark it shares with Sioux Falls O'Gorman, and will be looking to add to its state-record 12 titles. The matchup is set to begin at 7:30 p.m.

Friday's action begins with the Class 9B final between Harding County (10-1) and Langford Area (11-0). Harding County, which is making its eighth state finals appearance (tied for most among teams that have never played 11-man), will be looking for its first title since 2012. Langford Area is the only program in this year's finals that is making its DakotaDome debut. Start time is set for 10:30 a.m.

The 11B final, a 1:30 p.m. start, features a familiar match. Winner (11-0) and Tri-Valley (7-4) will play in the state finals for the third time, joining matchups in 2009 and 2012. Winner is making its 13th state finals appearance overall, while the Mustangs play in the finals for the eighth time.

Friday's action concludes with an all-Eastern South Dakota Conference matchup between Pierre (9-2) and Yankton (8-3), a 7:30 p.m. start. The Governors won 31-0 when the teams faced off on Sept. 25 in Pierre. Yankton, the defending 11AA champion, is making its 13th state finals appearance, while the Governors is in the finals for the third time in program history, the first since winning 11AA in 2013.

The big schools take center stage on Saturday night, when O'Gorman (9-2) and Sioux Falls Washington (10-1) face off in the 11AAA final, a 7:30 p.m. start. The teams met on Sept. 18, with Washington winning 39-23. O'Gorman is making its record-tying 15th appearance, while Washington is in the finals for a ninth time.

Tickets for all seven finals are available through the USD ticket office at [www.goyotes.com](http://www.goyotes.com)

## Van Ginkel Named Valley Player Of The Week

South Dakota defensive end Andrew Van Ginkel has been named Missouri Valley Football Conference Player of the Week as announced by the league office. It's the first such honor for Van Ginkel, a redshirt freshman from Rock Valley, Iowa.

Van Ginkel had a sack, forced a fumble, and recovered two fumbles in Saturday's 34-31 win against Southern Illinois inside the DakotaDome. His strip sack and recovery set up a 44-yard touchdown drive for the Coyotes' first score of the game. He recovered a fumble forced by teammate Drew Iddings on the SIU 19 with 5:21 remaining that preceded the game-winning touchdown.

Van Ginkel finished with three solo tackles against Southern Illinois. His nine sacks this season rank seventh nationally and are the sixth-most in program history. He is also one of 11 players in the nation who has recovered three fumbles this season.

South Dakota (5-4, 3-3 MVFC) hosts South Dakota State (7-2, 4-2) at 1 p.m. Saturday in Vermillion.

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## Smith Brought Culture Change To USD Men's Hoops

BY JEREMY HOECK  
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"If I were a stock, I would certainly buy."

That was Craig Smith's message to fans when he was hired as the new head men's basketball coach at the University of South Dakota in March 2014.

If you were to look at an S-Curve, he said that day, USD was on an upward trajectory. "And fast."

Turns out, he was as much talking directly to his players as he was to the crowd in attendance.

Smith, who had been lured away from the Big Ten universe at Nebraska, had helped – alongside Tim Miles – lead two teams, Colorado State and Nebraska, to the NCAA Tournament. He came to Vermillion with a reputation of turning programs into consistent winners.

He was hired at USD to take the Coyotes to the Big Dance.

And his new players understood right away that it wasn't simply talk from Smith. It wasn't just him saying the right things to the fanbase. No, he had tournament pedigree.

"It wasn't just him talking about the NCAA Tournament, it was, 'I've been there, I know how awesome it is,'" senior Eric Robertson said during Monday's media day session in Vermillion.

"It wasn't a want, it was a need for us to be there."

Thing was, USD had some work to do.

Not since 2010 had the program won a conference tournament, and that was back in the Great West days when the Coyotes were beating Texas-Pan American and Houston Baptist.

When Smith was hired, the program

hadn't put together a winning season in four years (2009-10) and hadn't won a game – it was 0-2 – in the Summit League tournament.

In came Smith. And in came a culture change.

"The culture of a coach travels with you," he said Monday. "It's always been our philosophy, we want to play the winning style."

Nobody, not even Smith, expected a drastic turnaround in year one under the new coaching staff. The Coyotes weren't going to improve from 12 wins to, say, 20. Not overnight.

But the fact that USD had an above .500 record (17-16) and won a game in the Summit League tournament for the first time was proof – coupled with the opening next year of the new on-campus arena – that men's basketball was on the rise in Vermillion.

Soon enough, the Coyotes will be at the level of South Dakota State and North Dakota State, which are both perennial NCAA Tournament threats out of the Summit League – a one-bid conference.

"To get a taste of that, and having the belief that we can do anything we set our minds to, was huge," Smith said. "Once you get that taste, you'll do anything you can to be the best you can be."

Spend even 10 minutes with Smith and you can see the culture change.

It's in the way he talks about basketball. It's in the confidence. It's evident in his recruiting: USD is winning battles with other Summit League teams for certain players – such as Triston Simpson, a guard out of Lincoln, Nebraska, who will sign this week.

That's the winning culture Smith likes to talk about.

"Culture is a word he brings up a