



SPORTS

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USD Tops Marquette

BY JEREMY HOECK

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VERMILLION — A pre-game message in the locker room for the University of South Dakota women's basketball team centered on a puzzle metaphor.

It was time to start putting the pieces together.

In that analogy, Nicole Seekamp would be the most critical piece. The one that when slotted in the right spot, would allow every other piece to fall into place.

The combination of her performance and her team's play helped to — for now — alleviate the frustrations of the first two games when the senior was on the bench.

Seekamp scored 16 points and had a career-high 12 assists as the Coyotes rolled past a young Marquette squad 97-69 in Monday night's home opener at the DakotaDome.

"Getting her back, everyone had more confidence with themselves. We knew what we were doing," said senior point guard Tia Hemiller, who added 15 points and eight rebounds.

"It's great to have her back, and now things are starting to finally come together."

Seekamp had been granted a fourth season of eligibility by the NCAA, but had to sit out the first two games — what the NCAA calls a

"withholding."

In her absence, USD struggled offensively, with outputs of 59 points and 43 points. She then returned last Thursday at Kansas State, where she had 20 points, 10 assists and eight rebounds in an overtime loss.

Seekamp then picked right up Monday where she left off.

"I'm not really sure if it's the way we handled things or not, but we did kind of feel disjointed," USD head coach Amy Williams said.

Those kind of struggles in the first two games were understandable, given two things: The Coyotes had practiced with Seekamp all pre-season, but then she had to watch. And USD is also trying to work in six newcomers.

The result was 29 assists on 37 made field goals, and 40 points from reserves.

"Today felt a lot better; a lot more comfortable," Williams said. "We're starting to find ours."

There weren't exactly signs early that the Coyotes were primed for a comfortable win over the Golden Eagles (of the Big East Conference, despite the significant edge in experience. Marquette owns the nation's youngest roster, with eight true freshmen and two returners.

The hosts — who were a perfect 15-0 at home last season — led by



JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D South Dakota's Tia Hemiller pulls up for a jumper during the Coyotes' matchup with Marquette on Monday at the DakotaDome in Vermillion. Hemiller scored 15 points and had eight rebounds in the 97-69 victory.

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Tanager Of The Week



Amanda Finnegan has been named the Plain Talk Tanager of the week for her contributions to the Vermillion Dance Inferno and the high school Show Choir.

ELYSE BRIGHTMAN/ FOR THE PLAIN TALK

Finnegan Dancing To The Top

BY ELYSE BRIGHTMAN

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As a junior Amanda Finnegan's natural talent of performing has already made her a standout for the Vermillion Dance Inferno as a first year member and the Vermillion High School show choir as a second year member.

"Performing in front of people is like the best feeling in the world," Finnegan said.

Coaches for both activities deem Finnegan a leader, and her ability to set into and excel at that role has named Finnegan the Tanager of the Week.

Not only is Finnegan a first year dance team member, she was also selected as co-captain by other team members.

What she doesn't have in experience, she makes up for in hard work and discipline," said dance team coach Joni Freidel.

Finnegan joined the dance team last year after her sister, who graduated, was on the dance team he senior year. She thought her experience in show choir would help transition to dancing.

"I've been in show choir so I like dancing so I decided to give it a try," Finnegan said.

She found her time spent in show choir paid off and she was able to pick up dance quickly, especially with the help of her time management skills.

"Learning routines actually comes really, really easy to me," Finnegan said. "I think part of that is, I'm in so many things that I know how to manage my time, so then I learn it at practice so I don't have to spend as much time out of practice doing it."

Freidel also agreed that Finnegan's time in show choir helped her with dance.

"She has transferrable skills because of her musicality and performance ability with show choir and just raw natural talent," Freidel said.

Finnegan has also been performing with the school's show choir for two years after joining her sophomore season and recently competed at the All-State event.

The All-State Chorus is an audition group that traveled to Rapid City for three days to compete against other schools from around the state.

"We performed on Halloween and that was all with extra practices," she said. "I think it was eight or nine

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Volleyball Ends Season With 3-2 Loss To Denver In Summit Tourney

DENVER — Denver's Kayla Principato and Ruth Okoye combined for 27 kills and the Pioneers (26-6) outlasted the South Dakota Coyotes (15-16) 25-13, 25-14, 19-25, 25-21 in the semifinal round of the Summit League Tournament Saturday in Hamilton Gymnasium.

"This is obviously not the way we wanted our season to end," said South Dakota head coach Leanne Williamson. "We did not play well in sets one or two, but I was proud of the way the team came out and fought in sets three and four.

"We were faced with a lot of adversity this year and our team continued to push every day to improve. We are happy to have made it to this point, but losing in the semifinals is something that will drive us going into next season.

"The four seniors have done a lot for our team and will leave a lasting impact on our program."

Principato led the Pioneers with 14 kills and Okoye added 13 more. Sarah Schmid also had double-digit kills with 10.

Denver's Monique Domme led the offense with 26 assists. Piyusha Boteju added 22 more and had 10 digs as she recorded a double-double.

Three other Pioneers had double-digit digs. Cassidy Rooke had 18. Nola



FILE PHOTO South Dakota's Brittany Jessen, center, celebrates a point in the first set of Summit League volleyball match against Denver at the DakotaDome held in early November.

Baise and Cassie Baird each had 11.

Junior Audrey Reeg led the Coyotes with 18 kills and 17 digs for her 17th double-double of the season.

Junior Lindsey Brown and fresh-

man Hayley Dotseth had 11 and 10 kills, respectively.

Sophomore setter Brittany Jessen

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Coprigh, Redbirds Soar Past South Dakota 46-0

NORMAL, Ill. — Illinois State senior running back Marshaun Coprich carried 30 times for 251 yards and scored four touchdowns in snowy and windy conditions to lead the sixth-ranked Redbirds to a 46-0 win against South Dakota Saturday at Hancock Stadium.

Coprigh, the nation's third-leading rusher, scored touchdowns on runs of 12, 45, 12 and 74 yards to essentially wrap up his second consecutive Missouri Valley Offensive Player of the Year Award. Illinois State (9-2, 7-1 MVFC) wrapped up at least a share of its second straight Valley championship. The defending national runner-up Redbirds will likely be a top-eight seed when tomorrow's FCS playoff field is announced.

South Dakota (5-6, 3-5) completed 4 of 23 passes and totaled 155 yards against a defense that was allowing 380 on average entering the weekend. The Coyotes played without leading receiver Brandt Van Roekel and had leading rusher Michael Fredrick carry five times for nine yards. South Dakota was shut out for the first time since

the season opener at Kansas State.

Illinois State quarterback Tre Roberson completed 2 of 8 passes for 40 yards, but ran for 121 on 11 carries. His 80-yard touchdown run with 4:12 to go in the third quarter gave the Redbirds a 36-0 lead.

Illinois State scored touchdowns on all three second quarter possessions against a strong wind to take a 23-0 lead into halftime. The Coyotes fumbled the opening

kickoff to the second half and four players later, Coprich was in the end zone for the third time to make it 30-0.

South Dakota went without a first down on nine of its 13 drives. Junior fullback Drew Potter earned his first handoffs of the season and led the Coyotes with 76 yards rushing on 15 carries. Backup quarterback Brian Woodward, who rotated in and out with starter Ryan Saeger all game, ran 10 times

for 44 yards. The Coyotes' best chance at a score was a dropped 32-yard touchdown pass in the end zone on the final play of the third quarter.

Senior linebacker Keyen Lage led the Coyotes in tackles for the sixth time this season. His eight stops give him 249 during his four-year career, the fourth-most by a Coyote since 2000. Senior defensive tackle Nick Jacobs got his fourth collegiate sack and had two other tackles.

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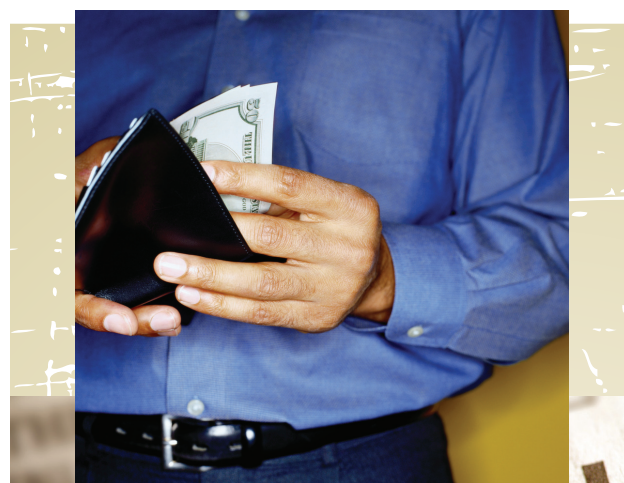
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