

USD volleyball prepares for toughest nonleague test this weekend in Omaha

By Alan Dale

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One more weekend playing one of the tougher non-league volleyball schedules faces the University of South Dakota Coyotes.

USD (4-5) wraps up a challenging pre-Summit League slate with arguably its toughest test yet: The Creighton Classic in Omaha. "This is a great tournament for us to end on heading into conference," USD head coach Leanne Williamson said. "Playing this level of competition will help us play at a high level and get us ready for our conference opponents."

They open the Classic with Colorado (8-1) on 4:30 p.m. Friday. It will be the team's second game against a Pac-12 squad. The Coyotes dropped their season opener to Arizona in four sets.

Then on Saturday USD takes on the hosts Creighton (6-3) at noon and then the Big 10's Illinois (5-3) at 5:30 p.m.

Being two hours from home will be a nice way to wrap up a month of travel. "Playing closer to home is also an advantage for us," Williamson said. "We have been traveling for the last few weeks, and it will be nice playing in front of a good fan base for our team as well as

a small amount of time on the bus."

That less time traveled will help as plenty of time is needed to prepare.

"Creighton is a team that we are fairly familiar with," Williamson said. "We played them this past spring and had a lot of success. We have also seen them in the fall in the last few years. Our players know what they need to do in order to have success against them and I believe they will be fired up to play them once again."

"Illinois is a very good team year in and year out. They are a Big 10 team that will have length and athleticism. We are always excited to play a team like this that has a different style of play. We have never played Illinois, but I know our girls are looking forward to the opportunity to play a team from a major conference."

"Colorado is another very good team that has had a lot of success in the past. They are going to bring us another opportunity to showcase what we can do as a team."

The Coyotes come in after a 2-1 weekend in Fayetteville, Arkansas where they defeated the hosts and Stony Brook while losing to a solid Southern Methodist club. So week three was the most successful of the pre-season to date.

"Looking at the first cou-

ple of weeks of tournament play, we can look at some matches, both wins and losses that we are happy with," Williamson said. "However, we are far from satisfied with some of our other matches. We still have a lot to improve upon, and we are looking forward to making some of those changes."

"We haven't hit our peak yet, which is good for us. We want to continue to strive towards that mark though and find a way to become the best team that we can be by the end of the season."

With conference play looming a week later, a strong performance in Omaha could be just the boost an up-and-coming program needs.

"This weekend could definitely help us make a statement going into conference," Williamson said. "We know that we have the potential to be the best team in the Summit, but we need to earn that title. It won't be given to us. Our players are working hard and are determined to improve one day and one match at a time."

Sophomore outside hitter Audrey Reeq agrees that the Coyotes could benefit from this next weekend.

"It's very important because we start conference games the following week so

this is the foundation," she said. "This is an opportunity to play great teams and really show what we are good at and what still needs work as well. It will be a good test for us and a good beginning to our real season."

"It's way more fun to play teams that can bury the ball and challenge your athleticism. These big teams make you work a lot harder for points. That makes it more fun to play volleyball. No points are given or handed to you."

Nothing has been handed to the USD women who will have played clubs from Pac-12, SEC, Big-12, and Big 10 squads over the month.

"I definitely think that we have played one of the toughest schedules, but every opponent is difficult for different reasons," Williamson said. "We have played and will play this weekend some very tough opponents from large conferences which we believe helps to prepare us for our conference. However, I know that there are other teams that have also challenged themselves which is one of the reasons why the Summit League continues to get stronger each year."

"Each team wants to be at the top of the conference at the end of the year, and each team will fight for it starting next weekend."

USD men's golf team continues to improve

By Mark Upward

For the Plain Talk

The University of South Dakota men's golf team, fresh off of a strong performance at the SUE Invitational in Edwardsville traveled to Nebraska City, Nebraska, to play in the University of Nebraska-Omaha Invitational Monday and Tuesday of this week.

USD (898) took fourth-place, in the 10-team invitational that saw some very competitive scoring as the top six teams were separated by only five points.

The University of Nebraska-Omaha and Weber State tied for first place honors with a team score of 894.

"Today's final round had to be the highlight of the tournament," said USD head coach Nick Hovden. "We didn't give up and played well enough to be the lowest score of any team out there today. This performance gave us a lot of confidence today."

Individually, the University of South Dakota saw Sam Matthew shoot rounds of 74, 76, and 71 which placed him in fifth-place on the leader board.

Other USD finishers were Grant Campbell in sixth (222), Dakota Clark tied for 12th (226) and Matt Swanson tied for 16th (228). Campbell shot an 8-over par on

the first round, but came back with a sensational second round of play at 4-under par with a 68.

This swing from first to second round enabled Campbell to finish high in the standings.

However, Campbell wasn't designated as a team player for the tournament so his score wasn't counted in the team standings.

"Not selecting Grant shows the amount of depth we have and why it is such a hard time selecting individuals to compete at an invitational," said Hovden. "Had Grant been in the team scoring, we would have won the match."

There won't be much time to worry about what would've or should've been as the Coyote men's golf team will start the process of qualifying rounds at practice to select the team members to play in the South Dakota men's and women's tournament next week in Sioux Falls at the Minnehaha Country Club course.

The SDSU Invitational in Sioux Falls will feature the University of South Dakota, South Dakota State University, North Dakota State University, University of North Dakota, University of Northern Iowa, Drake University, and Augustana.

"This is always a fun invitational and it has a lot of bragging rights that goes with winning it," said Hovden.

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against San Diego State. They really moved the ball. They are a talented team.

NAU lost 38-7 at San Diego State in its season opener.

Offensively the Coyotes have moved the ball quite well against Oregon and Montana in losses and emphatically in the USD victory over William Penn.

Injuries on the offensive line and the continued maturation of sophomore quarterback Ryan Saeger are key.

"We're going to try to continue that because that's our DNA," Glenn said. "We are going to try to balance it up. Ryan's got to be on the money and come through for us."

Being on the money would mean cashing in for a team that needs to get over the hump.

At least the expectation is there now.

"We are close, but I am tired of being close," Glenn said. "We have to get better in all three areas to win our league. They are all hitting on all cylinders and we aren't there yet."

MVFC Notebook by Jeremy Hoeck
(Jeremy.hoeck@yankton.net)

1. The nationally-ranked opponent train rolls for the University of South Dakota football team.

When No. 22 Northern Arizona visits the Dakota Dome on Saturday afternoon, it will mark the sixth consecutive ranked FCS foe the Coyotes will play, dating back to last season.

The Coyotes (1-2) are coming off a road loss to fourth-ranked Montana and will again face a Big Sky Conference team it played last season. Northern Arizona (2-1), an FCS playoff participant, held off USD 22-16 last fall in Flagstaff.

Going back to a season ago, the Coyotes have faced — in order — ranked teams Youngstown State, Montana,

South Dakota State, North Dakota State and Montana.

South Dakota's output in those previous five games? Close loss, close loss, loss, blowout loss and close loss at Montana.

The Lumberjacks built a 19-0 lead and limited the Coyotes to 58 yards of offensive before USD amassed 226 yards in its final three possessions.

2. Jacks Host Oshkosh

Following back-to-back wins over Big Sky Conference teams, South Dakota State returns home to host a lower-level game this Saturday.

The 10th-ranked Jackrabbits (2-1) welcome Division III Wisconsin-Oshkosh to Brookings for Saturday night's 6 p.m. Beef Bowl game.

Oshkosh, 0-2 on the season, graduated a bulk of its talent from last season's 8-2 squad that finished third in the Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference.

"We don't see necessarily the same team on film as last year, but we know because it's a lower level, they'll come in ready to play and ready to prove themselves," SDSU head coach John Stiegelmeier said Tuesday.

3. Indiana State Not

Ranked The last place team in the Missouri Valley Football Conference pre-season poll is slowly climbing its way into national polls.

Indiana State, coming off a 1-11 season a year ago, is off to a 2-1 start this season and secured the league's second FBS victory of 2014 with a road win last Saturday at Ball State.

And yet, the Sycamores didn't crack the top 25 in either of the FCS polls released Monday — they received votes in both, however. Did they feel slighted?

"To me, it's a process, and I understand that," head coach Mike Sanford said Tuesday. "We're just taking it week to week. We feel like respect will come."

Indiana State is off this week and will host nationally-ranked Liberty on Sept. 27.



Corey Strang (3) battles Creighton's McKynzie Dickman in women's soccer action Sunday in Vermillion. Strang and the USD Coyotes fell to the unbeaten Bluejays 3-1.

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The two border rivals kick off at the USD Soccer Complex as the Coyotes aim to end a three-game losing streak while beginning a solid three-match run of non-league play before Summit play begins.

Sunday at noon the Coyotes travel to Waterloo, Iowa and a date with Northern Iowa (2-4-2).

"We've never beaten North Dakota or Drake (who they play Wednesday in Des Moines)," USD head coach Mandy Green said. "To beat North Dakota is huge. I want to beat them because we should beat North Dakota it's a winnable game for us. It would show we know how to win and close games out."

"As long as we are seeing progress I'll be OK."

Progress was shown in 48 hours as the Coyotes played up to a better Creighton team after dropping down in effort against Wyoming.

"We were all playing separately and not as a team," USD senior Colleen Reeves said. "Friday we seemed to be all here by ourselves and not as focused. I think we were getting comfortable."

"(Sunday) we were playing for each other."

Reeves acknowledged that the pull of schoolwork and life may have caused a bit of the lack of togetherness before the Wyoming loss.

"Well it was the first Friday where we had school before a game, so we weren't like on the road where we think about the game all day long," Reeves said. "We have to think about school and all other things like that. Some people might have had tests or things that have to do with that. We have to sort things like that out and try to do something to get us together."

Junior Kasha Meyer was much happier on Sunday after the performance. The team fell to Creighton thanks to the Bluejays taking advantage of two USD errors to lead 2-0 at halftime.

Creighton added a late goal against the run of play as the Coyotes bossed the action.

"We definitely came to play in the second half," Meyer said. "We played to our ability and if we were to play like that all game we would have killed them. We applied more pressure on them in the second half and they didn't know what to do."

"Everything was encouraged, everything was positive with us today."

Both Reeves and Meyer admit they love the allure of soccer where a team can statistically dominate a game and still lose.

That one golden opportunity can make the difference and it was safe to say USD had more than the spoils of scoring opportunities against Creighton.

"It's whoever finishes

more," Reeves said.

They hope they can finish much better against North Dakota.

"There is so much animosity between the teams," Reeves said. "Especially us seniors we've never beat them."

A win against a team like this can only help as Summit League play encroaches.

"A win would be huge for our confidence," Meyer said. "It would be nice to finally say we are the better team."

Green saw the difference and it may pay off.

"It was like night and day where against Wyoming we came out flat and had no energy," she said. "We didn't perform up to our ability and I was irritated because I thought we left (a win) on the table."

"Against Creighton we had to give our best performance and I feel like for 50-60 minutes of it, I thought we did some good stuff. I was happy to see that it shows progress."

A look back at the past weekend — Jeremy Hoeck, Press & Dakotan

Bouncing back from a sluggish game two days earlier was the goal for the University of South Dakota soccer team.

Doing so against an unbeaten Creighton team wasn't going to make that task any easier.

Improving on the best start in program history, the Bluejays of the Big East Conference held off the Coyotes

Alan Dale/ The Plain Talk

3-1 on Sunday in Vermillion. Still, despite the loss, USD (4-4) wasn't exactly run off the field against a superior opponent. The Coyotes, who managed just five shots in a loss to Wyoming last Friday, out-shot Creighton 17-11 and had an 11-6 edge in shots on goal.

"If someone would have showed up at halftime and not seen the scoreboard, they would've thought we were way ahead," said senior midfielder Shannon Keller.

Instead, the Coyotes were playing catch-up the whole game.

The Bluejays scored in the sixth minute on a goal from Alyssa Jara. Then in the 20th minute, she scored again to give the visitors a 2-0 cushion.

From there, the game evened out until late into the second half when the Bluejays scored on a Kirstyn Corder goal in the 76 minute.

Though they Coyotes continued to keep pressure on Creighton, they weren't able to capitalize until the 83rd minute when Tsakakis scored on an assist from Keller.

Against Wyoming, Mandy Green was not happy.

The University of South Dakota head soccer coach had just finished watching her team drop a 2-1 home game to Wyoming on Friday in Vermillion.

Then came a nearly 15-minute post-game conversation with her Coyotes (4-3), who were out-shot 14-5.

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