

The voice of Marshall

Ryan Rohlik has announced SMSU and MHS games for two decades

By Jake Przytarski
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MARSHALL — A lot has changed in local media over the past 20 years, but one name and voice has remained constant through it all. That name is Ryan Rohlik, but you may know him better by his nickname, “Swami.”

“Swami” is the morning show host for Marshall Radio’s KKCK station, and a play-by-play broadcaster in the evening where his Southwest Minnesota State University and Marshall High School football and basketball calls are appointment-listening experiences.

Here’s a look back at how Rohlik began his career in the ultra-competitive radio business, and a peek into what has made him so successful in his role as the voice of the Mustangs and Tigers for the better part of two decades.

Learning the ropes

They say the only way to get better at something is through practice.

During Rohlik’s time as a college student learning the ins and outs of radio and television at Brown Institute in Mendota Heights (now Brown College), he received plenty of it as part of a play-by-play course that had him attend multiple Minnesota Timberwolves games. There, he used a tape recorder to practice doing play-by-play calls.

“I would go with some buddies to the Timberwolves games and they knew what I was doing so I would sit in the middle of them so it wouldn’t be as weird,” said Rohlik. “I would do 10-12 Timberwolves games during the semester and then bring it back and (the professor) would critique you.”

While helpful at the time, Rohlik admitted that there was no substitute for the real thing — likening the experience of calling his first live game on the radio to the buildup before taking the



Photo courtesy of Greg Devereaux Photography

Ryan “Swami” Rohlik watches the action during a recent Southwest Minnesota State University women’s basketball game. Rohlik has spent the last 20 years as the morning show host at Marshall Radio’s KKCK station as well as the play-by-play broadcaster for both SMSU and Marshall football and basketball games.

field as an athlete.

“To be live no matter how big of a station it is or whatever, your first time by yourself of cracking the mic is a very unique experience,” said Rohlik. “You’re nervous almost like when you would play a sport or you’re standing in front of a large crowd speaking.”

An abrupt start

After graduating from Brown Institute, Rohlik took jobs as an intern with various pop stations around the Twin Cities area before applying for positions back near his hometown of Wabasso. Thankfully, an opening with Marshall Radio allowed him to return to the southwest region of the state where he took over

board operator duties during Timberwolves games.

A little under a year after starting with Marshall Radio, Rohlik’s role with the station changed drastically when in January of 2000, 20-year broadcaster and SMSU Hall of Famer Jerry Marquardt, the legendary voice of SMSU football and basketball, passed away unexpectedly.

In need of a replacement with the Marshall and SMSU basketball seasons in full swing, Rohlik’s boss Brad Strootman suggested that he join fellow broadcaster Justin Thordson for the next game’s live-call. With little experience to hang his hat on, Rohlik was admittedly hesitant.

“I mean, I’m 19 years old thinking, ‘No chance, man,’”

said Rohlik. “Knowing the magnitude of what Jerry was to not only calling the games, but to the community for both Mustangs and Tigers was just something that I didn’t think I was ready for, but Thordson talked me into it and here we are still doing the same kind of thing. Hopefully I do a good enough job that people enjoy it.”

According to Rohlik, his first few times cracking the mic didn’t go as well as he would have liked as his passion sometimes hampered him. As time went on, he knew he had to reign it in.

“I think early on I was very immature. I was very passionate and probably over the top at times and that isn’t what a good play-by-play guy is,” said Rohlik. “You can be passionate, but

not to the level I felt that I was at. Maybe I’m harder on myself, but I just felt listening to some of those games that I did in the early stages of getting into this, I felt personally it was brutal and I knew that I had to get better and more mature.”

‘If you script it, it’s not going to be natural’

With more and more experience accumulated over time, Rohlik developed his formula for success and used it to bring some of the area’s greatest sports moments to life.

The key for Rohlik in finding

Rohlik PAGE 3B

PREP WRESTLING

Minneota knocks off Quad County and Pipestone Area in triangular meet

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MINNEOTA — Fresh off a strong performance this past weekend at the Rumble on the Red tournament in Fargo, North Dakota, the Minneota wrestling team returned home for a triangular meet with Quad County and Pipestone Area on Thursday hoping to continue its impressive run.

With a raucous crowd on hand, the Vikings gave their fans plenty to cheer about with a pair of hard-fought victories over the Cobras in a 61-6 final and a down-to-the-wire thriller over the Arrows, 33-30.

Minneota coach Matt Myrvik sensed that there may have been some lingering fatigue from the long weekend of competition, but came away pleased overall with the team’s performance.

“Well I think we showed maybe we were a little tired from the big long weekend at the Rumble but I thought they wrestled well,” said Myrvik. “We’re putting out a lot of young kids, so is Pipestone, and it’s about learning as the year goes on and battling through some positions.”

Minneota 61, Quad County 6

After Quad County fell to Pipestone in a 66-12 final to begin the triangular, the Cobras faced host Minneota in a dual that the Vikings controlled from



Photo by Jake Przytarski

Minneota’s Cole Sanow jostles for position against Pipestone’s Mason Krakow during the 182-pound bout of a triangular Thursday. Sanow earned a 7-2 decision in the bout and Minneota defeated Pipestone 33-30.

start to finish.

Minneota’s Troy VanKeulen opened the match with a pin over Quad County’s Tarrick Rupp (1:51) before Peyton Gillund stepped to the mat and earned a decision victory over Hunter Wilke to give the Vikings a 9-0 lead. Following a forfeit win for Eric Carrasco, the Vikings added to their lead as Truman Wambeke won via fall (1:45) over Chase Corner, and Zack Fier defeated Luke Kluver via major decision to make it 25-0.

At the 138 and 152-pound weight classes, the Vikings picked up two additional wins via pin as Kade Lozinski defeated Caleb Hoff (0:30) and Blake Reiss defeated Richard Vaughn (1:11). The Cobras earned their lone victory at the 160-pound weight class with Jack Howard defeating Branden Johnson 39 seconds in with a pin. Minneota’s Jonah Gruenes, Cole Sanow, Hudson Scholten and Jayden Gamrak rounded out the rest of

the victories for the Vikings all by way of forfeit.

Minneota 33, Pipestone Area 30

Looking to build off their dominant win over the Cobras, the Vikings powered through a 4-0 deficit to start the match following a major decision

Minneota WR PAGE 2B

PREP SPORTS ROUNDUP

WWG opens New Year with 75-57 win over YME

GRANITE FALLS — Westbrook-Walnut Grove got a strong individual performance on the road from Ethan Mischke to help defeat Yellow Medicine East 75-57 on Thursday.

Mischke led all scorers with 26 points. Nathan Ross added nine points in the win, while Colton Pilaczynski and Sam Kleven recorded eight points apiece.

Kyle Chase led YME with 14 points.

WWG (5-4) will host Luverne on Saturday while YME (0-6) will host Renville County West on Monday.

WWG 39 36 — 75
YME 25 32 — 57
WESTBROOK-WALNUT GROVE: Curry 1-1 0-0 2, Mischke 10-16 3-4 26, Kuehl 2-6 1-1 5, Lien 2-6 0-0 4, Z. Knutson 1-3 0-0 3, Ross 4-9 0-2 9, E. Knutson 2-2 0-0 5, Pilaczynski 3-9 2-4 8, S. Kleven 3-5 2-2 8. TOTALS: 29-59 10-17 75.
YELLOW MEDICINE EAST: Korstad 1-2 0-1 3, Chase 5-17 0-0 14, Sneller 4-11 0-0 8, Jimenez 3-3 0-0 6, Jans 2-3 1-2 5, Johnson 2-5 0-1 4, Dahlager 3-11 4-4 10, Whitebuffalo 1-1 2 2 4, Berends 1-1 0-0 3. TOTALS: 22-56 7-10 57.
STEALS: WWG 1 (Z. Knutson 1); YME 8 (Chase 2, Sneller 2, Dahlager 2).
BLOCKS: YME 3 (Johnson 2). FOULS: WWG 13; YME 19 (Johnson).
TURNOVERS: WWG 11; YME 11.

Hannah Jelen led Canby with 10 points, four rebounds and four steals.

RyAnn Hansen added eight points in the loss.

Canby (2-6) will travel to MACCRAY today.

Windom 26 30 — 56
Canby 17 17 — 34
CANBY: Hulzebos 1-7 0-0 3, Jelen 4-13 0-3 10, Johnson 1-1 0-0 2, Hansen 3-15 2-2 8, Bruns 3-8 1-1 7, Wente 1-3 0-1 2, Noyes 1-2 0-0 2. TOTALS: 14-57 3-7 34.
REBOUNDS: Canby 38 (Wente 10).
ASSISTS: Canby 9 (Johnson 3).
STEALS: Canby 10 (Jelen 4).
BLOCKS: Canby 5 (Wente 5). FOULS: Canby 15. TURNOVERS: Canby 27.

Montevideo 79, DB 40

MONTEVIDEO — Montevideo opened the 2020 portion of the schedule with a 79-40 win over Dawson-Boyd on Thursday.

Avery Koenen scored 25 points to lead the Thunderhawks.

Avery Bartunek led DB with 15 points. Amelia Olson added eight points and six rebounds for the Blackjacks.

DB (0-6) will travel to Minneota on Tuesday.

Dawson 15 25 — 40
Monte 43 36 — 79
DAWSON-BOYD: Husby 3-6 0-0 6, Lund 1-6 0-1 2, Olson 2-8 2-2 8, Conover 1-2 0-0 3, Breitenstein 1-3 2-3 4, L. Bartunek 1-3 0-1 2, A. Bartunek 5-10 4-8 15. TOTALS: 14-39 8-15 40.
REBOUNDS: DB 22 (Olson 6).
ASSISTS: DB 8 (L. Bartunek 3).
STEALS: DB 6 (A. Bartunek 3).
BLOCKS: DB 1 (Wolner 1).
FOULS: DB 9.
TURNOVERS: DB 25.

Prep girls basketball

Windom Area 56, Canby 34

CANBY — Windom Area defeated Canby 56-34 on Thursday.