

'Bubble' bursts

By Mike Gill
Journal Sports Writer

The Siouxland Ice Arena, in operation for less than a year, tumbled to the ground under heavy winds Wednesday and suffered irreparable damage, causing losses over \$150,000.

Winds clocked up to 55 mph hit the air-suspended facility, tearing the fabric and causing severe cuts.

The facility, south of the Marina Inn in South Sioux City, is an all-purpose ice facility used by various Siouxland groups. The eight-year-old structure, commonly referred to as the "Bubble," was purchased used by a group of Sioux City-area hockey people last summer from Jackson, Tenn. Over the past winter, it was used for Sioux City Musketeer practices, Siouxland Youth Hockey, figure skating groups and the general public.

The rips in the structure, which rises 47 feet above the ground, caused the air-suspended top to crash into the ground, breaking part of the dasher-boards and plexiglass.

"It's a mess," said Bob Post, a member of the Siouxland Ice Arena's board of directors. "When the winds started blowing, it just swayed back and forth and finally burst. It was eight tons of canvas falling on the ground. There was so much pressure (from the winds) that it just couldn't sustain it."

Post said the "Bubble" is a total loss, but a large portion of the interior building was not damaged. The building lockerrooms, ice-skating warming rooms, lighting fixtures, ice-refrigeration unit and the ice-making Zamboni machine survived the crash.

Members of the volunteer group which brought the facility to South Sioux City said it will be rebuilt.

They indicated it will be completed in time for the opening of Musketeer training camp (Sept. 20) and the area youth hockey programs.

The building was insured.

"We just want to ensure people in the area that we will have a hockey program going. We're certain of that," said Post. "We'll rebuild the unit here, probably as a metal enclosure, or as a last resort, we'll have outdoor ice."