

Cross Country: Tanagers A Young Team With Veteran Experience

BY ELYSE BRIGHTMAN
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Running is a sport unlike most.

The physical demands can deplete the body of all resources while the mental demands weight heavy on the mind. It can be argued whether the physical or mental demands are harder on a cross country runner, but having a good support system in a team can make all the difference.

"We try to have a family atmosphere and really look out for each other," said Vermillion High School's head cross country coach Kelly Fishback. "Our younger kids support our varsity runners and then the varsity kids cheer on the young kids."

That atmosphere has paid off for the Tanager team while it has just one senior in a group of 19 runners; there is enough experience in the field to have a big showing at the state meet in Sioux Falls on Oct. 30. Last year, Vermillion sent three runners to the state meet in Huron.

"We have the majority of last year's team back, so with an added year of maturity, especially for the boys team, we look to be improved," Fishback said.

One of those runners Fishback is referencing is Justin Sorenson, who might be only a freshman, but qualified for the state meet last year as an eighth grader. Along with Sorenson, fellow freshman Landon Smith ran in the state track meet this past fall and is looking to join his teammate at the cross country finale this year.

On the girls' side, Maddie Lavin is making her return as a sophomore and looking for another state championship title, which she won in 2013 as an eighth grader.



Madisen Lavin (411) • Vermillion

VERMILLION TANAGERS			
Cross Country			
8/28	Beresford Inv.	10 a.m.	
9/8	Canton Inv.	4 p.m.	
9/18	Vermillion Inv.	3:45 p.m.	
9/21	Alcester-Hudson Inv.	3:45 p.m.	
9/24	Yankton Inv.	4:15 p.m.	
10/2	Lennox Inv.	4 p.m.	
10/8	Dakota XII Conf. (Beresford)	4 p.m.	
10/15	Region 3A (Beresford)	3 p.m.	
10/24	State Meet (Sioux Falls)	1 p.m.	
ADMIT ONE			

Many members of the girls' team had a successful year on the track in the spring and look to carry that momentum into fall. Lavin, Rachel Brady and Katie Kost, this fall's lone senior, all medaled in Spearfish and Rapid City in June, while sophomores Melissa Mikkelsen and Madisen Martinez raced at the meet.

The schedule this season will help the runners become familiar with the courses used for post season meets as the Tanagers open the season in Beresford on Friday which will also be the site of the site of the region 3A meet on Oct. 15, a course that Fishback calls "a home away from home".

Fishback is hoping a few other changes in the schedule will give her runners an edge late in the season, not only terrain wise, but ones that will give the runners a more competitive atmosphere.

"We have added the Sioux Falls Christian meet, which is on the same course as the state meet in Sioux Falls," she said. "Also, the Augie Twilight Meet, a very competitive schedule."

After Vermillion's opening meet on Aug. 28 in Beresford, the Tanagers travel to Canton on Sept. 8 for the Canton Invite.

Vermillion Boys' Soccer Squad Set For First Season Of SDHSAA Play

BY ELYSE BRIGHTMAN
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VERMILLION — The players on the boys' soccer team at Vermillion High School have one thing on their minds this year: qualify for state.

Every team begins the years with the hopes of earning a spot in the state tournament, but for this team it will mark the first year as a sanctioned high school sport and the first time in three years with a state tournament to aim for.

"There was no state (tournament) last season because we weren't sanctioned, so we just kind of played around," said senior Alec Leber.

In 2012, the last time the Tanagers competed in a state tournament, Vermillion defeated Harrisburg 2-1 to take the Class A title.

"This will be more similar to when I first started coaching four years ago when we had a solid organization and a state tournament," said head coach Curt Nelson. "The last couple years, there's been less and less teams in our league and last year there was only one other team in the state that wasn't sanctioned, so we were not affiliated with any state groups and didn't have any state tournaments."

As a club team, the Tanagers went 3-3-1 in 2014

VERMILLION TANAGERS			
Boys' Soccer			
8/22	at Freeman Academy	L 0-1	
8/29	vs. Groton	4 p.m.	
9/4	vs. Hot Springs	5 p.m.	
9/8	vs. S.F. Christian	5 p.m.	
9/11	vs. Freeman Academy	5:30 p.m.	
9/19	at James Valley Chr.	2 p.m.	
9/22	at Tea Area	5:30 p.m.	
9/29	at S.F. Christian	8 p.m.	
10/3	Playoffs First Round		
10/10	Playoffs Semifinals		
10/10	State Final at Mitchell		
ADMIT ONE			

and faced the only other club team in the state, Chamberlain, twice. The other five games were played against already sanctioned teams, so even with the move, Vermillion will face familiar opponents this year.

"I think probably half the teams we played last year, we will see again," Nelson said. "They're all really good teams, so we need to work on our conditioning because we're not as deep as some of the other teams. That will be a major focus, and making sure we can just get our fundamentals down and really play together as a unit. (That) will really be the key to compete with some of the bigger schools."

Improving fundamentals for a solid foundation was agreed on by both players and coach, not only for this

season, but for the future of Vermillion High School soccer.

"Since we're a young team this year, I think just getting into it more and kind of working with the younger ones to get fundamentals down," Leber said.

He's looking to the leadership of Leber in the defense, midfielder Joe Miller and Andrew Callahan to guide the team in the right direction, but with the move to a sanctioned team, a change in the attitude and approach to the season will need to come from all players.

"(Our attitudes) are not the same," said Seth Druin. "We're more focused than we were last year."

Vermillion's soccer team is made up of players from 7th through 12th grade, and with a young team facing bigger schools with more experienced players, the Tanagers are looking to develop some of the younger players and may be looking at more of a rebuilding year.

"There are a lot of really good young players that are coming up in seventh and eighth grade," Nelson said. "Ages that will really be great for our JV team and we had a solid JV team last year. We're excited to develop them."

Vermillion's season opened Saturday with a match against Freeman Academy in Freeman.

Tanagers

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Getting down the correct skills and form early in the season will be the difference in this year's team.

"Any bad habits that get started now will plague us through the season," Hughes

said. "That means making some adjustments to what we are doing now, which can be a challenge to change and improve. The girls are really working at it."

The schedule saw the Tanagers opening the season in Yankton on Aug. 22, with the first home meet on Thursday Sept. 3 against Harrisburg.

"We predominantly play

smaller teams with some of the larger teams sprinkled in at triangular and quadrangular matches," Hughes said. "We are scheduled to play the Sioux Falls teams at the end of the season just before the state tournament."

The schedule gives Vermillion time to improve before facing the larger schools later in October.

VHS Girls Look To Build On '14 Success

BY ELYSE BRIGHTMAN
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The Vermillion High School girls' soccer team is coming off a successful 2014 season, and this year are equipped with the talent and experience to be just as, if not more, successful.

Last season was the first that Tanagers' girls' soccer played as a sanctioned high school team, as well as with a brand new head coach, and made it through to the semifinals of the state tournament, where they fell to St. Thomas More and finished the season at 6-4-2 overall.

This season is starting out a lot like 2014 as the Tanagers faced West Central in the opening game and for the second year in a row, came out on top.

"We won that game (last year). It was a win that really boosted our confidence and it helped build us," said second-year head coach Shannon Fitzsimmons. "Being a new coach it takes a while for the kids to get used to my style as a coach and the training and we just used that momentum to continue throughout the season. We were pretty pleased to make it to the semifinal round last year."

This team is anything but inexperienced with six juniors and seven seniors and Fitzsimmons is looking for contributions from all positions to carry that momentum into this year and to build the foundations for the underclassmen and the future of the team.

"We lost an outside wing who played quite a few minutes for us, and so we'll be looking to put a few younger girls in there and keep legs fresh on that outside so we can run the field," Fitzsimmons said.

Frequently rotating the younger players in the open positions will cut down on fatigue that can cause costly errors and allow for a build-up of experience.

"It gives them time to grow,



Natasha Samudzi • Vermillion

so when they are seniors they should be really good and will have a lot of practice," said senior captain Natasha Samudzi.

Vermillion also lost a big spot in goalkeeper Hailey Freidel, who graduated this spring, but sophomore Mady Gilbertson has accepted the challenge after taking time off last season.

"It's not easy to transition from not playing and then having to play your varsity game and expect to play well in the goalkeeper spot," Fitzsimmons said.

Senior Sowmya Ragothaman will be in charge of the back line in the central defender position, which, according to Fitzsimmons, is where the offense begins.

"We would like to maintain possession, work on our one-two defending and then use our defense to then counter, not just quickly, but effectively," Fitzsimmons said. "We had lots of momentum last year, but we didn't always finish out possession with a goal, so we're looking to try and be more effective at finishing our opportunities this season."

Ragothaman will have the help of junior Mady Gregoire at outside defense, who recorded significant minutes as a sophomore.

VERMILLION TANAGERS			
Girls' Soccer			
8/20	at West Central	5 p.m.	
8/25	at Tea Area	6 p.m.	
8/27	vs. Garretson	6 p.m.	
8/29	vs. Groton	2 p.m.	
9/1	at S.F. Christian	5 p.m.	
9/3	vs. West Central	5 p.m.	
9/10	vs. S.F. Christian	5:30 p.m.	
9/12	vs. Tea Area	5:30 p.m.	
9/14	at Garretson	6 p.m.	
9/29	Playoffs First Round		
10/3	Playoffs Semifinals		
10/10	State Final at Mitchell		
ADMIT ONE			

The transitions through the midfield will put the ball at the feet of senior captain Autumn Barnett and then up front to the speed of Samudzi. The pair were pleased with the way the team has come along in pre-season and in the first game.

"Communication on the outsides, we can work on some more, but at this game we were getting better every minute," Samudzi said. "We heard our outsides and what we did really well was connecting and finding each other and eventually we learned that (a) players going to be there and the way that they play."

As far as game-plans are concerned, Fitzsimmons knows there are still adjustments to be made, which was apparent in the opening game when the team moved from a 4-4-2 formation to a 4-5-1.

"We take one game at a time," she said. "As the game is being played we'll adjust when it is necessary. We stick to our game plan because we believe in our game plan, but when adjustments are necessary during the game we have confidence that we will be able to transition and still be effective."

The Tanager girls' soccer team looks to make a return to the state tournament scheduled to begin on Sept. 29. The state finals are set for Oct. 10 in Mitchell.

VHS VB

FROM PAGE 6

can just bring out attitudes right up."

If the team continues from the first week of practices, she expects to see much improvement by the end of the season.

"I just expect the girls to play hard and give 100 percent effort," Jarchow said. "We would like to obviously be at the state tournament, but we're just looking for the girls to keep improving throughout the year to get to be where they want to be as players."

A new coach also allows the athletes to start off on a new foot. They are given the opportunity for a true try-out and a chance to showcase

their skills in front of a coach who's never seen them play before.

"Since we have a new coach this year, it's like a new start. You don't have to worry about what you did in the past or anything, you can just start over fresh," Schmitz said.

Jarchow is looking to the four seniors on the team, Schmitz, Kyliegh Melstad, Kylee Retzlaff and Kayla Stammer, to lead on the court and off, but also credits the eight juniors for their efforts during the first practices.

"I expect them, being the oldest, to lead the team, but just whoever is going to step up and work hard and be a leader not only on the court but also off the court," she said.

The combination of skills, new coaching, positive at-

itudes and player experience with 12 upperclassmen will see the team through the 2015 season.

Tanagers volleyball begins the season in Sept. 1 when the team travels to Lennox for a 5 p.m. start time.

VHS Golf

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a team to compete week to week so we can continue to improve. We have to prepare ourselves to win each week."

Other golfers on the team this year include sophomore Cody Mattes, freshman Devin Anderson, eighth graders Sam Ward, Brady Marteniz, Billy Radigan, Liam Mechling, and seventh grader Josh Bern.

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