

Desire, effort spark season-opening win

By Parker Knox
Sportswriter

Despite a distinct height and experience disadvantage—something they will likely face more often than not—the Vermillion Tanagers again proved that desire and supreme effort can sometimes turn underdogs into top dogs.

The result in Friday's season opener at Harrisburg was a 59-58 Tanager victory over the Tigers, figured by many to be the favorite to represent Region 4A at the state level in March.

Coach Jay Drake said he told the team ahead of the game that, "if they gave 32 minutes of everything they had, we thought we would at least be within striking distance in the fourth quarter."

Who would have thought that the Tanagers, after trailing 4-3 in the early going, would take the lead and never trail again!

"We're a little undersized, especially compared to Harrisburg, but the kids really battled to offset that," Drake said. "With our schedule we have to have a similar effort just to have a chance in most of our games."

Senior co-captain Cole Andre was a huge factor in Vermillion's stunning win. He had the game of his life, going 7-of-14 in field goals, including 6-of-11 from three-point distance, and sinking six of seven free-throws tries for a 26-point performance.

Erik Ustad set the tone right at the outset, giving the Tanagers a 3-0 lead and then a 6-4 lead they would never relinquish. He finished with nine points. Jason Rasmussen contributed eight points. Kyle Freidel scored seven points and was the epitome of the Vermillion effort, snaring seven rebounds, dishing off successfully for five assists and picking off a pair of steals.

The scoring was rounded out by Tyler Husby with six points, Austin Krier with two and Aaron Steele with one. Sam Ekstrom also got into the contest off the bench.

Harrisburg would say the Tanagers won the game at the free-throw stripe, and that would be partially true. Vermillion was able to control its fouling to the point that Harrisburg had only nine opportunities at the stripe, making only four. On the other hand, the Tanagers connected on 16 of their 26 free-throw attempts.

The Tigers had a 27-15 rebounding advantage. Ustad's two game-opening treys were followed by the first of Andre's bombs and a three-point play from Freidel. It was 15-11 after one quarter, but the Tanagers kept rolling with a 14-9 second-quarter advantage with Andre plunging two more three-point daggers into the Tigers' carcass.

He twice hit treys in the third period and Husby scored twice as the Tanagers upped their amazing lead to 11 points twice. Ustad scored his third trey near the end of the period, and it was a crucial one, giving his club a 44-36 lead heading into the final quarter.

At that point it appeared briefly that the Tanagers might be looking over their shoulders, playing not to lose rather than to win, as Harrisburg went on a 7-0 run to start the final stanza. But kaboom! Andre came to the rescue with another three-pointer to stem the tide

after the Tigers had come to within 44-43.

Rasmussen scored a clutch field goal to lift VHS ahead by 51-47 with 2:15 to go, and Harrisburg began to find three-point range, again coming to within one at 51-50.

At that point the Tanagers began to coolly control the ball and draw Tiger fouls until bonus time was reached. That finally came with 41 seconds left when Andre sank both ends of a one-and-one.

Those were the first two of eight free throws by the Tanagers in the final 41 seconds—the next two from Rasmussen at 0:33, two more from Andre with eight seconds remaining and the last two from Andre with two seconds showing.

Freidel blocked a Tiger shot and snared a key defensive rebound in the final frantic 20 seconds.

The Tanagers had had a frustrating week just prior to the game, missing two key practices because of the snow-storm.

"We just told them to do their best," Drake said, and that's what they did.

Last season the Tanagers went 0-8 in Big 8 Conference play. After one game this year they are already better than that.

VHS 51, Lennox 48 Same song, second verse!

For the second straight game Vermillion's cardiac Tanagers found a way to defeat a taller, perhaps more talented team. But this time they led 2-0 in the first minute and were never ahead again until the game's final 17 seconds.

However, it matters that you're ahead only at the end of the game, and that's where the Tanagers were Tuesday night, up by 51-48 over a stunned Lennox team that had led by as many as 12 points in the second quarter and three times in the second half by nine points.

Lennox fouled heavily throughout the game. It appeared well into the second half that that fact wouldn't matter, but in the end it cost the Orioles dearly. The visitors' 6'7" junior center, Chris Kruse, was a dominant factor on the boards, but he scored only four points. When he committed his third foul midway through the third period, he went to the bench for the rest of the quarter. Thirty seconds into the last quarter he got his fourth foul and sat down again, never to return to the game despite a shrinking Oriole lead.

Jordan Neeman came off the bench to score 20 points for Lennox, 14 of them in the first half as he almost single-handedly lifted his team to what seemed like comfortable leads.

But the pesky Tanagers kept battling. Down by eight midway through the first quarter, they got back to within three



Tanager Erik Ustad (12) drives past a Lennox defender during the second half of basketball action in the Vermillion High School gymnasium Tuesday. Ustad scored eight points in Vermillion's thrilling come-from-behind victory. See more photos at spotted.yankton.net. (Photo by David Lias)

points. Trailing by 12 nearing halftime, they crawled back to within nine on five straight points by Cole Andre to end the half, including a clutch three-pointer on a feed from Tyler Husby just before the buzzer.

Andre remained hot, coming out of the locker room to score eight straight points, two of them on assists from Kyle Freidel and the other basket on Jason Rasmussen's feed. Suddenly Vermillion was within 29-28.

Lennox rebuilt its lead to eight, but Andre scored on a floater from the free-throw stripe, giving him 15 straight Vermillion points. Again the deficit mounted to nine, but Husby scored, and then Freidel, who had warmed the bench with three fouls for 3 1/2 minutes, re-entered the game and immediately scored. The Tanagers were within 39-34 with a quarter left.

Erik Ustad's free throw opened the final quarter, but Keegan Mechel's two field goals again put Lennox up by nine. It was 44-35 with six minutes left.

Nobody in the house would have dreamed that, from that point on, it would be a 16-4 run by Vermillion to finish the game. Not only unlikely, but surely impossible!

A drive by Ustad was offset by Neeman's last basket, but two free throws by Ustad and one by Freidel made it 46-40. Rasmussen's basket at the 3:51 mark cut the gap to four. Then Ustad lifted Tanager fans from their seats with a resounding three-pointer with 2:37 left.

Freidel became the next hero for VHS, stealing the ball at midcourt and driving up the court where he was fouled on his drive. His free throw tied the game with 2:08 to go.

Tanager girls lose to Harrisburg 49-40

By Parker Knox
Sportswriter

Thanks in large part to Lindsey Johnson's 21 points and her team's 2-to-1 rebounding advantage, Harrisburg dealt a season-opening 49-40 loss to Vermillion in girls basketball at Harrisburg Friday.

In Nick Mayer's debut as head coach, the Tanagers never led but clawed their way to within 39-37 midway through the fourth quarter. Vermillion had several chances to tie or take the lead but could never get a shot to fall. The Tigers were able to get enough baskets in the late going to swell their final advantage to nine points.

"I thought the kids played really hard," Mayer said afterward. "We may not have come away with the 'W,' but we took a lot of positives from the game. We got after Harrisburg on the defensive end, which resulted in 19 Harrisburg turnovers."

Thirty-five of Vermillion's 40 points came from three scorers. Sophie Nehlich-Arobba had 10 points, Lexi Regnerus eight and Hannah Nehlich-Arobba seven. Sophie also contributed four assists while Hannah had five steals. Sarah Day was top rebounder with six and also had five steals.

"We had some matchup problems, and the first quarter was a little bit of a struggle, but our kids adjusted pretty well to Harrisburg," Mayer commented. "We learned a lot about our personnel, and we got some contributions off the bench."

Mayer and his crew have had this whole week to practice as they endure a 10-day gap between their first and second games. Vermillion returns to game competition Monday evening at Madison, followed by afternoon games at Tea Area on Dec. 29.

VHS bowling team travels to Sioux Falls

The VHS bowling team traveled to Sioux Falls Washington on Dec. 11, bowling at the Eastway Bowl.

The Vermillion girls lost to Washington 4-46 and the boys lost 3 1/2-46 1/2.

VHS results against SF Washington:

Girls' high game was Sara Marker with a 212, Lindsay Robinet with a 188 and Shelby Covill bowled a 180. Sara Marker has high series for the girls with a 537.

Boys' high game was Michael Brunick with a 220 and Matthew Moore with a 210. Christian Wasley had high series for the boys with a 554.

The next match will be Dec. 18 at Sports Bowl in Sioux Falls at 4 p.m.

Don't Forget...
Deadline is 4 PM Tuesdays
Vermillion
PLAIN TALK 624-2695

SPECIALIZED EXTENDED ACUTE CARE...
Select Specialty Hospital - Sioux Falls. Come practice the true profession of nursing, where your skills are fully utilized and you see the results in a small critical care environment. Qualified nurses should have one year critical care experience. Hiring for:
Registered Nurse (RN) (PRN)
Physical Therapist (PT) (PRN)
Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) (PRN)
• Diverse case load • Competitive pay • Great Staff To Work With!
Please forward your resume to:
Kelly Leaver, Select Specialty Hospital
800 E. 21st Street, Ste 3300, Sioux Falls, SD 57105
(605) 322-3398 • kleaver@selectmedicalcorp.com
www.selectmedicalcorp.com EOE/Drug Free Environment

South Dakota Cattle Women
BEEF GIFT CERTIFICATES ARE ON EVERYONE'S LIST
• Redeemable anywhere in the U.S. at supermarkets, meat markets and restaurants for American Beef
• Convenient! Just Mail. Send beef certificates and your shopping list done.
• Perfect for gifts to business acquaintances, friends, employees and for Christmas bonuses.
• Available in \$5, \$10, \$20 and \$25 Certificates
Order by mail by sending check to SD Cattlewomen
PO Box 451, Winner SD 57580
or email lharkin@goldenwest.net

Football? Basketball? Volleyball?
GET IT ALL ON YOUR MIDCONTINENT CHANNEL.
Midcontinent Channel is the place to cheer on all your favorite local sports teams. Check your Midcontinent Interactive Program Guide or your local listings for the channel number and schedules. Then grab a seat in your favorite recliner and let the games begin.
For schedules and more information, visit midcomm.com/midcosports
Midcontinent COMMUNICATIONS
part of our community • part of your life!
midcomm.com • 1.800.888.1300

Coyote Gameday
ANSWER THE CALL
Coyote Women vs. MOUNT MARTY COLLEGE
Sunday, Dec 20th
1:00PM Tipoff • DakotaDome
GREAT GIFT IDEA!
Mini Season Ticket Packages
ONLY \$59
(Premier Pack OR Great West Conference Pack)
Call (605) 677-5959
or visit www.usdcoyotes.com for ticket information.
Get your seat to USD Coyote basketball TODAY!