Tanager boys battle for season-opening win

By Parker Knox
Sportswriter

Down by 10 points after one quarter and still trailing by seven midway through the third period, Vermillion's boys came on strong at crunch time in their season opener at home Friday.

The Tanagers gained their first lead of the entire game on Nick Jensen's basket with 5:20 to go, then broke away from a 48-48 tie to outscore Harrisburg, 8-1, down the stretch to win, 56-49.

"It was nice to escape with a win," said victorious coach Jay Drake, whose team committed only two turnovers in the second half and sank 28 of their 38 free-throw opportunities, accounting for exactly half of their points from the stripe.

"There was not much rhythm to the game in the first half," Drake said. "We couldn't get a flow going, but we stayed in it."

The Tanagers had eight first-quarter turnovers, four of them in a rough stretch at the end of the period when the Tigers went on a 9-0 run to close out the quarter with a 20-10 lead.

But then the Harrisburg offense went into the tank. The Tigers had only one field goal during an 11 1/2-minute stretch from the start of the second quarter and extending into the second half. Meanwhile, Vermillion cut its deficit to five at halftime, 28-23.

Just when the Tanagers crawled to within a point at 29-28 in the third, Harrisburg's offense woke up, at least temporarily, on a pair of crippling three-point baskets. They were the first two of four treys for the Tigers in that period, three of them by Gunnar Rang, who led his team in scoring with 19 points.

Vermillion, facing a 41-37 deficit as the final quarter began, rallied with five quick free throws, one by J.T. Sorensen and two each by Tanner Settles and Jensen. Jensen's bucket at 5:20 made it 44-43 for VHS. Two more Sorensen free throws put VHS up by three, but Rang's fifth three-pointer and another Tiger bucket put the visitors up by 48-46.

Austin Krier picked a good time for his only field goal of the game, tying the game with 2:29 remaining. The Tanagers regained possession of the ball with 84 seconds left, and the rest of the contest belonged to Sorensen. He had three rebounds and a steal in those closing seconds. His put-back of his own miss gave VHS a 50-48 lead, then Sorensen went to the free-throw line four times in the final 50 seconds, and he was successful on six of eight, allowing the Tanagers to pull away at the same time their defense was giving fits to the Tigers' three-point attackers.

Sorensen finished with 17 points, Jensen had 14, and Settles had 10. The rest of the points were seven from Krier, four from Anthony Leber and two each from Tanner Anderson and Carter Andre.

The Tanagers were ferocious on the Harrisburg boards, hauling down 18 defensive rebounds and allowing the Tigers only two rebounds off their own basket. Vermillion had 10 offensive boards for a total of 28 to Harrisburg's 18. Sorensen and Jensen with eight and seven rebounds, respectively, led the team in that category.

Settles had three steals, and Anderson and Andre had two assists apiece.

Typical of Vermillion's free-throw expertise were these marks: Jensen six of eight, Sorensen seven of 10, Leber four of six, Krier five of six, Settles two of four and Anderson two of two.

The Tanagers have this weekend free but play at Tri-Valley next Tuesday and at Tea Area next Thursday.

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Swimming and diving signs three recruits

SCHUTTINGER

HERRTING

South Dakota head swimming and diving coach Jason Mahowald is pleased to announce three commitments for the recruiting class of 2013-14 in Samantha Schuttinger, Greysen Herrting and Michael Pellechia.

"This early signing class is small but packs a big punch," said Mahowald. "Samantha and Greysen will both make an immediate impact for our team. Being able to attract a swimmer like Samantha shows how much the University of South Dakota has to offer."

Samantha Schuttinger is from Bishop Watterson High School in Columbus, Ohio, and specializes in freestyle and backstroke. In high school Schuttinger set three school records and won two Ohio State Championship titles. She has also won six All-American titles and been named all-district, all-Central Catholic League and all-state three times.

Greysen Hertting, a diver from Neenah High School in Appleton, Wis., was the Division One State Champion as a senior after finishing third as a junior. Herrting was a four-time Fox Valley Association diving champion, three-time FVA Diver of the Year and garnered All-American status as a junior. Hertting won every invitational meet she entered this fall and holds a personal-best 11-dive score of 507.85.

"We are very excited about Greysen's potential and really believe that she is going to be a big addition to our diving program," Mahowald said.

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