



Dakota Borgstrom of the Yankton Lil' Rascals drives against Vermillion's Jonathan Manning during the South Dakota Special Olympics Southeast Area Basketball Tournament, held Saturday, Feb. 6, at the Yankton Middle School. More than 250 players and hundreds of fans turned out for the tourney, with teams vying for berths in next month's state tournament in Mitchell. Along with Yankton and Vermillion, other communities sending teams to Saturday's tournament included Sioux Falls, Brookings, Brandon, Mitchell and Canton. (Kelly Hertz/Yankton Press & Dakotan)

Vermillion athletes participate in Special Olympics tournament

For the first time ever, the Vermillion schools participated in regulation basketball games during the South Dakota Special Olympics Southeast Area Basketball Tournament in Yankton.

Representing Vermillion were Cody Knutson, Shari Stammer, Tiffany Conrad, Kathie Herrera, Shayleen Davis, Dillon Hudelson, Robbie Johnson-Cheeseman, Raya O'Neill, James Solberg and Jonathan Manning.

Vermillion defeated Brookings White, 24-8, in its first game, then lost to a tough Lil Rascal team from Yankton, 10-4. In their final game the Vermillion athletes lost a 20-18 contest to the Sioux Falls All-Stars.

"It was a very successful day for the first time playing actual basketball games," said Coach Lori Jerred. "We are looking forward to participating in the state games on March 4-5 in Mitchell."

Tanager boys will face Harrisburg Friday

By Parker Knox
Sportswriter

With a tough week behind them and a potentially even rougher week just ahead, the Vermillion boys' basketball team plays at home Friday night against a team they know they can beat.

The opponent will be Harrisburg, and although the Tigers stand as the current No. 1 seed in District 7A, their record is 8-6. One of those six defeats was administered by the Tanagers by a 59-58 score in the season opener Dec. 11.

Next week starts on Monday with a trek to Wagner where the No. 6-ranked Red Raiders lie in wait with a 12-2 record. After that the Tanagers have a home date next Thursday against defending state "A" champ Madison, which was unbeaten until losing Monday to Sioux Falls Christian and which dealt Vermillion a 67-31 trouncing last Friday.

"They really got after us," Coach Jay Drake said about the game at Madison. "Our zone couldn't control them in the first quarter as we had hoped. They were really playing good team basketball."

The game got out of hand early. A 7-0 Bulldog run late in the first period, topped off by a half-court buzzer-beater, ended the initial stanza with a 21-9 score. Madison then outscored the Tanagers 20-8 in the second period. Another shot at the final horn ended the half at 41-17.

"When we got down early, we didn't show the fight that we had in recent games," Drake said. The Tanagers in seven straight losses prior to the Madison trip had been within sight of victory in the fourth quarter of all of them, but this time things got no better in the second half. Madison led 53-27 after three periods and won by 67-31.

It was the lowest point total of the year for VHS and the second-highest number of points the Tanagers had allowed.

Aaron Steele and Kyle Freidel with seven points each were Vermillion's high scorers. Jason Rasmussen added six, Cole Andre five, Tyler Husby two, Austin

Krier two and Nile Morecraft two.

Derrick Wiebe had a 16-point, 10-rebound, six-assist game for Madison. Michael Sullivan also scored 16 and Mitchell White 10.

Madison had a 29-20 rebounding edge but allowed the Tanagers only three rebounds off their own offensive boards. The Bulldogs had a 51 percent shooting game to the Tanagers' 33 percent.

"Our kids will be O.K., and they have a great attitude," Drake said. "We need to play hard these next three weeks and get some confidence back for the district tournament."

Tuesday night's intra-district game at Dakota Valley was nip-and-tuck through two periods, but the Panthers used a surge of momentum and team-wide quickness to force numerous Tanager errors. What was a fun game for a half turned ugly quickly after the intermission.

One play doesn't decide a game that ends 68-49, but there's no question at which point the momentum joined Dakota Valley's side. The Tanagers had the ball with eight seconds left in the first half, trailing only 26-23. The ball was knocked out of bounds with three seconds left, but the officials couldn't decide who should have possession. They gave it to Dakota Valley, and the Panthers' Matt Lupkes threw up a desperation off-balance heave that went through the net. Instead of a potential one-point game or tie, it was a six-point deficit.

The Panthers scored immediately as the second half began, and after a miss at the Vermillion end, they sank a three-pointer. The lead quickly ballooned to 13

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Gymnasts place second at triangular

By Parker Knox
Sportswriter

The postseason has arrived for the Vermillion gymnastics team, and now the trick is to place among the top three teams among four in the regional in order to advance to the state tournament.

Coach Mark Upward and his Tanagers join Madison, Wagner and West Central gymnasts in Mitchell for their regional meet at 4 p.m. Friday.

The top three teams will advance to the team competition at next weekend's state meet in Aberdeen, but so do the top 50 percent of the individuals competing in each of the four individual events. In addition, any gymnast who has met the regular-season qualifying standard of 8.5 in any event in at least three meets automatically advances to state.

There is no question who the No. 1 team at the regional will be. Madison is seeking its 16th consecutive state "A" crown.

The other three schools vying for the two remaining state tourney slots from this region got together for a triangular last week in Vermillion with Wagner placing first at 127.45 points, the Tan-

agers second at 119.7 and West Central third at 112.6.

"We have been trying to get to 120 all season," Upward said, "and this time we got to 119.7." The coach described the triangular as a "mini-regional," and said afterward, "We sort of know where we stand."

He said his gymnasts would be concentrating at practices this week on the beam event, which has been a season-long challenge for the Tanagers.

Wagner's Jessica Koupal won the all-around in the three-team meet here with a 33.7 score and won three of the four individual events — the beam at 7.95, floor exercise at 8.4 and the bars at 8.45.

Vermillion's Amber Walker was second to Koupal on the floor at 8.25 and on the bars at 8.1 and placed third on the beam at 7.4 and fourth in the vault at 8.6. Walker finished second in the all-around standings at 32.35.

The Tanagers' Elly Melby was fourth in the all-around at 30.55. She won the vault event with a 9.05 score and placed fourth on the bars at 7.9.

The other Vermillion placer was Jade Fostvedt, who ended up fifth on the beam at 7.2.



Vermillion's Amber Walker placed second in the all-around standings in the triangular meet held in the VHS gymnasium Feb. 1. (By David Lias)

Tanager girls nearly win three in a row

By Parker Knox
Sportswriter

The Tanager girls' basketball team doubled their victory total for the season during the past week, winning at home over Dell Rapids, 37-34, and over West Central, 60-35, and coming just short in an attempt to win three in a row Tuesday in a 49-40 loss at Dakota Valley.

Vermillion's last home girls game of the season occurs Friday night when Harrisburg, currently the top seed in District 7A with a 10-7 record, comes to the VHS gym as part of a girls-boys doubleheader. The Tanagers and the Tigers opened the season two months ago with a 49-40 Harrisburg win on its home court.

Next week the VHS girls close their regular season with a Monday date at Wagner. The Red Raider girls stand at 14-2 and are ranked fifth in the state in the Class "A" poll.

Vermillion will then have a week off until their District 8A opener on Feb. 23. The Tanagers will be the No. 4 seed and will play one of two semifinal games to be held on the home court of the No. 1 seed. Who that will be remains up in the air.

As of today, it would be Beresford (13-4), but the Watchdogs have just a one-game lead over Elk Point-Jefferson (12-5), and those teams play each other tonight. Dakota Valley is 10-5.

Coach Nick Mayer said he was "really

happy" with his girls' performance in the win over Dell Rapids. "The kids are playing hard, and I'm happy to see they are excited and willing to stay after practice to shoot around." He added, "They want to get better, and they know our main goal is districts."

The Tanagers trailed after each of the first three quarters, including 29-28 with eight minutes left, but they had a 9-5 final-period advantage over the Quarriers. Three players — Sophie Nehlich-Arobba, Sierra Allen and Kelly Amundson — led scoring with nine points apiece. Allen led rebounders with seven. Allen and Claire Jones had two steals each, and Sarah Day and Sophie Nehlich-Arobba contributed a pair of assists each.

Monday's 25-point win over West Central was surprising only because of that margin. Ten days earlier the Tanagers had lost to the Trojans in Hartford by 50-46 in overtime.

VHS extended a 10-8 first-quarter lead into a 24-13 halftime advantage and never looked back. "We played team basketball," Mayer pointed out, "and we had between 15 and 20 assists. It was great to see that kind of teamwork."

The Tanagers shot 44 percent from the field, a big improvement over most of their games when they have been in the 20 to 30-percent range.

Sarah Day scored 12 and Hannah Nehlich-Arobba 11 to lead the VHS scor-

ing. The team's 60 points matched their high mark of the season, which occurred the first time in a loss at Sioux City East.

Trying for three in a row Tuesday night at Dakota Valley, the Tanagers restricted DV's star, Allyssa Wall, to 12 points, but she was still a force with 14 rebounds and five blocked shots. Besides that, she had help as Taylor Neff scored 14 and Whitney Dunn scored 12 for the Panthers.

Sierra Allen with 18 points led Vermillion. Lexi Regnerus added nine, Morgan Erickson six, Sarah Day four and Hannah Nehlich-Arobba three.

A 9-0 run over a five-minute span late in the first period and extending into the second proved fatal later. The Tanagers, down by eight, crept back to within one on seven straight Allen points but fell behind by 10 in the second and by 12 in the third.

Baskets by Erickson, Day and Hannah Nehlich-Arobba and a trey by Allen made a game of it in the final period as the Tanagers crept back to within three, 38-35, with under three minutes to go. But Dakota Valley sank 11 free throws down the stretch to avert a come-from-behind Tanager win.

Mayer admitted his team was flat in the early going, and that proved costly. "We have to come out ready to play whether we have had a game the previous night or not," he said.

The Tanagers will get that chance tonight.

VHS bowling hosts S.F. Washington

By Parker Knox
Sportswriter

Vermillion's junior varsity girls won twice and lost twice in their four most recent games through last weekend.

"We have been struggling with teams that have been pressing us full-court," said Coach Lori Jerred, "and turnovers have plagued us recently." However, the coach said the team has been getting good contributions from every-

one but needs to work on taking

care of the basketball better.

At West Central the Tanagers were down only 28-25 after three periods but failed to score in the fourth quarter in a 39-25 loss. Lizzie Bye scored eight points, Claire Jones seven and Bailey Carlson five. Jones had five rebounds, Val Robinson four rebounds and Bye five assists.

Vermillion reversed a two-point halftime deficit in a 43-41 win at Canton. Robinson had seven points and two assists, Lexi Regnerus six points, Jones

five points and Bye five boards and five assists.

The Tanagers came all the way back from a 10-2 first-quarter deficit to beat Beresford, 36-30, behind 11 points by Jones, seven by Robinson, six by Morgan Erickson and five by Regnerus. Erickson had four rebounds and Jones and Bye five boards apiece.

Dell Rapids defeated VHS, 42-34. Kelly Amundson and Bye had four rebounds each and Robinson three assists and five rebounds.

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