

Boys basketball hoping to end season with winning record

By Parker Knox
Sportswriter

Vermillion has a chance tonight to complete the boys basketball regular season with a winning record.

The Tanagers take their 9-9 mark to Canton for the final tune-up to the postseason, which begins Tuesday.

The C-Hawks were 4-13 heading into last weekend's play, but Coach Jay Drake is wary of them, especially after they gave West Central a strong game just a week ago and have hung with other teams in several of their losses.

Drake said it will be crucial for the Tanagers to defend against a pair of sophomore starters, 6'3" Cody Willett and 6'1" Tyler Lems, among other C-Hawks. "But if we play well, we'll have a good chance," Drake added. "Our 10-day break since our last game has given us time to heal and practice. We just have to keep improving."

Vermillion goes to Canton on a bit of a roll, having played well in two straight wins—over Harrisburg on Feb. 10 and by 53-42 at Wagner on Feb. 14. "We played nine guys and jumped out to a nine-point lead in the first quarter," Drake said of the win over the Red Raiders. "They got back to within six points, but in the second half we pushed it out to eight or nine but could never get a comfortable margin over them."

Drake said his "big" stepped up on both offense and defense. The team played well defensively and enjoyed balanced scoring.

Nick Jensen led the club with

10 points, but Austin Krier had nine. Tanner Anderson, J.T. Sorensen and Nile Morecraft had eight apiece, Caleb Miller six, Jayce Huska three and Anthony Leber one.

The Tanagers led 16-8 after a quarter, 25-19 at the half and 39-32 after three.

VHS had a 35-26 rebounding advantage, paced by Sorensen's 10, Jensen's nine and Leber's six. Krier had four assists, and Sorensen and Tanner Settles had a pair of steals each.

Jack Robinson with 16 points and nine rebounds and Noah St. Pierre with 12 points and five assists led Wagner, which fell to 8-10.

District 8A play for the boys begins Thursday with a semifinal doubleheader on the home court of top-seed Dakota Valley. No. 2 Elk Point-Jefferson, which was 11-7 through last weekend, takes on No. 3 Vermillion in the first game. Then DV (16-3) goes up against No. 4 Beresford (3-16) in the nightcap.

The homestanding Panthers' three losses were to Sioux Falls Christian twice and to EP-J. They beat Beresford twice and Vermillion once, and another of their milestone wins was over the state's top "A" team, Dell Rapids.

The district championship game will be played Saturday, March 3, on the home court of the higher-seeded team.

In final Big 8 Conference standings Madison won the title with a 7-1 record, its only loss being to second-place Vermillion (5-3). Lennox was 4-4, and Harrisburg and West Central both went 2-6 in league play.

Tanagers play beautiful brand of basketball Tuesday

By Parker Knox
Sportswriter

From the middle of the first quarter to halftime Tuesday night in the District 8A semifinals, Vermillion's girls played as beautiful a brand of basketball as one could imagine, soaring to a 31-17 lead at the intermission over Elk Point-Jefferson.

An hour later they were celebrating – but only for an hour or so! – a 56-31 victory that moved the Tanagers into the district championship game against Beresford at the VHS gym last night (Thursday).

Vermillion's 16th triumph in 20 games started somewhat slowly as they fell behind EP-J 7-4 and did something the Tanagers never do – miss four straight free throws. But when Beth Szymonski's bucket put Vermillion into an 8-7 lead, it was as if somebody unlatched the door of the bird cage and all the Tanagers flew out.

Up to then all Szymonski had done was grab off three rebounds, make a steal and score all eight of her team's points – that's all. But her third and fourth field goals unleashed a torrent. Lexi Regnerus and Kelly Amundson drained unconscious three-pointers that were perhaps the game's most fatal daggers so far as EP-J was concerned. Szymonski scored again to start the second period, making it a 12-0 run.

The Tanager lead reached 17 at one point in the second period, which may have been the Tanagers' best quarter of ball all season, and that's saying something. Bailey Carlson sank a trey, Szymonski swished a pair of free tosses, Amundson drove for a layup, Regnerus hit back-to-back three-pointers, and Val Robinson cashed in a pair of free throws. It was 31-17 at halftime.

Just 3 1/2 minutes into the second half the Tanagers' advantage of 14 at the half had swelled to 22 after Regnerus and Amundson each scored twice and Robinson let fly a three. It was 45-25 after three periods. From that point on, the Tanagers were happy to match basket for basket as time expired on the Huskies.

Szymonski with 16 points, Regnerus with 13 and Amundson with 11 led Tanager scoring. Robinson had five, Carlson four, Josie Huber four and Mackenzie Huber four.

As Vermillion outboarded EP-J 30-20, Amundson had seven rebounds, Regnerus and Szymonski five apiece, Josie Huber four and Mackenzie Huber three to lead that category.

While the Tanagers strangely missed nine of 17 free throws, they were adept at getting themselves to the line. The same could not be said for EP-J, which missed its only two free shots in the entire game.

The only Husky in double-figure scoring was Keely Bertram with 11. Amy Zeller and Audrey Truhe had six each.

The first semifinal contest saw No. 2 seed Beresford demolish Dakota Valley, 56-32.



Vermillion's Beth Szymonski sinks a field goal during the first quarter of basketball action against the EP-J Huskies that helped unleash the Tanager offense. Before scoring this basket, Szymonski had pulled down three rebounds, made a steal and scored all eight of her team's points.

(Photo by David Lias)

Coach Nick Mayer's Tanagers completed a glorious 15-4 regular season on Feb. 14 with a loss at Wagner against the unbeaten, No. 1-rated Red Raiders, 58-43.

"Wagner has an incredible amount of talent on that team," Coach Nick Mayer said. "Defensively they took us out of what we wanted to do."

Wagner soared to a 12-0 advantage to open the game, creating a huge hole for the Tanagers. They did rally to within five points at one point,

but Wagner capitalized at the free-throw line down the stretch when VHS had to foul to try to keep time on the clock and made 16 of 19 from the stripe in the game.

Lexi Regnerus had 13 points, Kelly Amundson 12 and Beth Szymonski 11 along with seven boards to lead the Tanagers' effort. Devon Brecke had 26 points and eight rebounds for Wagner, which shot 59 percent from the field. LaShawn Medicine Horn pitched in 19 points and Alexa Cimpl eight rebounds.

VHS gymnasts compete in state tourney in Brookings

By Parker Knox
Sportswriter

Two Vermillion gymnasts placed within the top 20 in their respective individual events as the state gymnastics meet came to a conclusion Saturday in Brookings.

Junior Jade Fostvedt placed 18th on the balance beam with a 7.683 score, and freshman Jamie Moos finished 19th on the

uneven parallel bars with a 7.650 count for the Tanagers' only top-20 places.

In other VHS scores from the individual competition, Moos was the only athlete to compete in all four events. She had 5.350 on the beam, 7.833 in floor exercise and 8.200 in the vault for an all-around score of 29.033.

Fostvedt scored 7.416 in floor

■ STATE, Page 09

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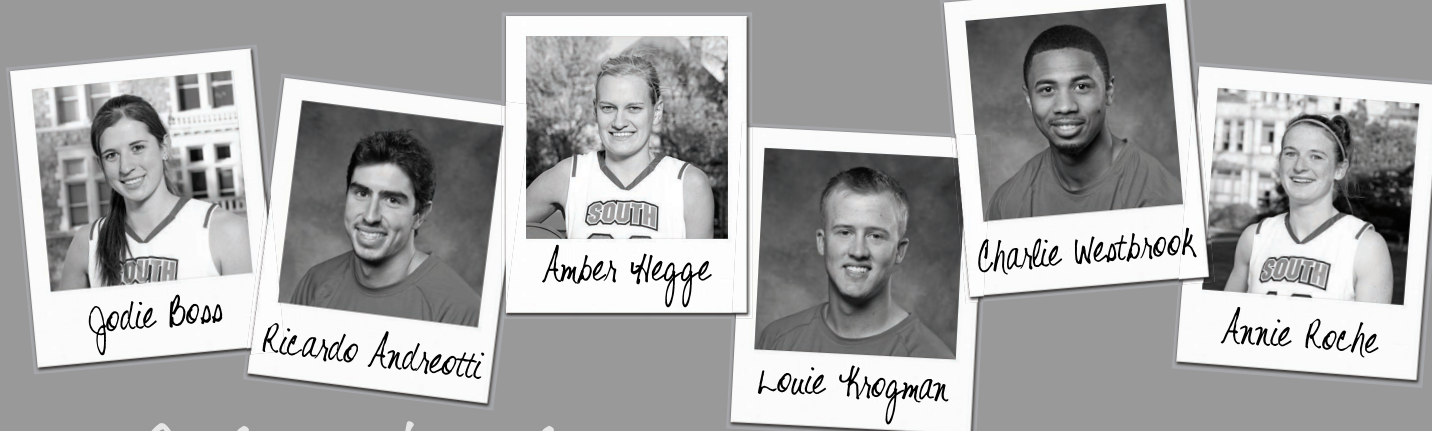
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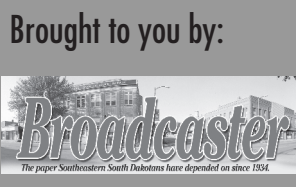
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