



Vermillion Prepares For State Track Meet

BY ELYSE BRIGHTMAN
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The Vermillion High School track team is paving the way to a strong showing at the state track meets.

At Tuesday's Dakota Valley Invite, the Tanagers ran only a handful of runners and came away with four first-place and five second place finishers.

"It was a good day. We backed off on a lot of our kids today because we're preparing for this weekend," said head coach Lenni Billberg. "Things are really starting to come together for us when we want them to."

Logan Peterson ran to first place in the 400m dash with a time of 55.0, just in front of teammate Jon Rosales who finished second with 55.7. Peterson also finished second in the 800m at 2:14.5.

Justin Sorenson took first place in the 3200m run with 11:21.7, beating second place Jon Green of Dakota Valley by just over 13 seconds.

Jeremiah Johnson ran a 23.4 in the 200m dash earning a fifth-place finish.

"Jeremiah ran a really good open 200 today. Faster than he's ever run, so that's fun to see," Billberg said.

The boys' 4x800m relay team earned first place by running a combined 9:07.3 and beating second place Canton by 34 seconds.

The boys team score came in at 64, earning fifth place in a field of six.

Maddie Lavin took the only first place finish on the girls' side in the 800m with 2:25.5. Lavin also placed third in the 1600m run at 5:48.2.

Ashley Schulz earned second place in the 200 with 27.9. The girls' 4x100 and 4x200 both took second running 53.5 and 1:55.7 respectively.

The girls' scored a combined 60 points placing the team fourth out of six.

Up next for the Tanagers are the Howard Wood Relays in Sioux Falls on May 1-2, the Yankton QB Relays on May 7 and the Dakota XII meet in Madison.

"We enter sort of like playoffs," Billberg said. "This weekend we go to Howard Wood, the biggest track meet in South Dakota. Next week, we go to Yankton and their fast track, the fastest track in the state, and then we start our Dakota XII region championship."

These meets prepare the team for the State Class A meet scheduled for May 29-30 in Spearfish.

"This is really the chance where we were trying to make sure we got the right relays, the right groups of kids to go and I think we're going to be successful," Billberg said.

Currently, Lavin is the only Tanager qualified for the state meet. She will be running the 800, 1-mile and 2-mile. Johnson, 200, and Peterson, 800, are close in their respective events and looking to qualify in the coming meets.



ELYSE BRIGHTMAN / FOR THE PLAIN TALK
Vermillion High School's Logan Peterson in the 800m run at Tuesday's Dakota Valley Invite. Peterson placed second in the event with a time of 2:14.5.

Tanagers Down Huskies In Six

BY ELYSE BRIGHTMAN
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An eight-run inning sealed the Vermillion High School baseball team's 11-1 defeat over the Elk Point-Jefferson Huskies in six innings last Friday night in Elk Point.

The game was scoreless through three innings before the scoring opened up in the fourth. The Tanagers plated eight in the frame, highlighted by Cole Anderson's two-run double bringing the score to 8-0.

"I kind of anticipated us to come out a little slow and a little flat," said head coach Jason Gault. "I think the first few innings it kind of showed that. We had some opportunities to get some runs across the board and we didn't."

Anderson, Hunter Christopherson, Carter Kratz, Joe Miller, Jack Brown and Travis Weber all recorded RBIs in the fourth inning.

"We just had some guys that just stepped up," Gault said. "We had some nice, quality at-bats with guys on base."

With one out and the bases loaded in the bottom of the fourth, Tanagers' pitcher Carter Andre worked himself out of the jam by striking out the last two batters to

end the inning. The Huskies' only score of the game came in the fourth from a bases loaded walk.

"(Andre) is one of those guys that's just an athlete," Gault said. "I told him when he came in from that inning 'You probably just got out of one of the toughest jams a pitcher could ever face.' That's no outs, bases loaded and he gave up one run then three consecutive outs after that. He kind of laughed at it."

The Tanagers scored another three runs in the sixth inning when Andre drew a bases loaded walk, bringing home Weber, before a two-run single by Kratz.

Jake Odens, Andre and John Benson combined on the mound for the near shut out.

"(Odens) did a nice job of, again, keeping the ball down, throwing a lot of strikes and kept us in the ballgame," Gault said. "The hitters couldn't catch up and by the time the fourth inning was there, we were firing on all cylinders."

The Tanagers stand at 4-2 on the season and 4-0 in the region.

Vermillion's next game is at home against Parkston on Saturday, May 2 with the first pitch scheduled for 1 p.m.

New Faces At Spring Game

BY JEREMY HOECK
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Many of the top playmakers were in street clothes. The starting quarterback wasn't in the building. A former linebacker was carrying the ball out of the backfield. And a tight end came in for a series at offensive guard.

That was the kind of patchwork effort needed, because of injuries, for Saturday's University of South Dakota spring football game at the DakotaDome.

Given the opportunities for increased action throughout 15 spring practices because of injuries, guys like Nick Jensen – an offensive lineman from Vermillion – saw extended time and set themselves up for extended action in the fall.

"Obviously being down on numbers, we couldn't do what we usually do," said Jensen, a 6-foot-5, 290-pound redshirt freshman lineman.

"But it was still a good chance to

have more of a live scrimmage."

For the record, the Coyote defense bested the offense thanks to four interceptions, three 3-and-outs, and a goal-line stand, but the bigger story centered on two related issues: Injuries and the opportunities for new faces to showcase themselves.

"We have a lot of guys who were injured, but I took this opportunity to learn the playbook more and get in and know what's going on," Jensen said.

"So that if I do come in in the fall, it's not too much of a dear in the headlights thing."

Junior Ryan Saeger, who started four games last season, saw all the first-team reps at quarterback this spring in place of senior Kevin Earl who remains back home in Illinois healing from a lower back injury.

The Coyote offense was also without its top two running backs, as junior Trevor Bouma and sophomore Khorey Kilgore were held out with injuries. That forced USD to move Anthony Vigneri –

listed as a linebacker last season – and Cole Lindhout, a wide receiver, as well as Clay Fisher to running back.

With such a limited stable of options, the run game was understandably limited: The Coyotes rushed for 46 yards on 15 carries, with 14 of those yards coming from Saeger. Through the air, Saeger was 9-of-17 for 89 yards and two interceptions – one was deflected and caught at the line, and the second was certainly catchable by a receiver in the end zone.

"When we had the right guys in there, we did some good things on offense," head coach Joe Glenn said. "Defensively, we made some plays. We stopped the run better than we did last year."

"It's just really hard because we're a little disconnected with the running game right now."

The same was true on the offensive line.

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ELYSE BRIGHTMAN / FOR THE PLAIN TALK
The Vermillion Greysox pitcher John Merrigan in Saturday's home opener against the Wynot Expos. The Greysox beat the Expos in a walk-off RBI single in the 10th inning.

Greysox Open With Extra Innings Win

BY ELYSE BRIGHTMAN
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The Vermillion Greysox amateur baseball team opened its season with an extra innings win over the Wynot Expos Saturday night at Prentis Park.

"It was a lot of fun and we have a lot of new guys on the team so we didn't quite know what to expect, but it was a good showing. A lot of guys were interested and really excited about the year," said manager and third baseman Mike Moran.

The game was scoreless heading into the bottom of the 10th inning when Dan Bell drew a walk to load the bases with one out.

The next batter, Joe Mazour hit the game winning, RBI single down the right field line driving home Colin Olson for the final score of 1-0.

"I was thinking, get a pitch I can hit," said Mazour. "Something middle of the way that I can hit out into right field, so I was just waiting for something like a fastball."

Garret Harms, Nick Anglin, John Murrigan and Grant Lueders combined on the mound for six hits and ten innings.

Jayce Huska, Lueders and Mazour went 2-for-3 on the night. Anglin was 1-for-2.

The Greysox travel to Lennox on May 1-2 for the inaugural Lennox Reds Charity Tournament where the team is scheduled to play Humbolt at 5 p.m., Saturday and Lesterville at 1 p.m., Sunday.

Hurdling The Distance In Track

BY ELYSE BRIGHTMAN
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The steeple chase track event isn't one most people get a chance to try.

"It's a hurdle race for distance runners," said Dan Fitzsimmons, assistant track coach at the University of South Dakota (USD).

The race consists of 3,000 meters, seven and a half laps around a 400 meter track, with four barriers and one hurdle jump. The last hurdle jump contains a small pool of water on the other side.

"It gradually gets less deep the farther out you go so the point is to step on the barrier and hurdle over (the water)," said Isaac Allen, a junior runner for (USD).

The hurdles for this event are 30 cm tall for women and 36 cm for men.

Unlike other hurdle events, the barriers don't fall down when the runner hits them.

The steeple chase can be found at almost every college track meet, but since most high schools don't offer the event, athletes have limited experience when they get to the college level. Runners may have the opportunity to compete in this event in club track teams and at some private high schools do offer it.

"I did it during the summer a few times, just because I was a part of a summer track program, so I had the opportunity to do it," Allen said. "I was like, 'that looks fun.' I saw it on the Olympics and things of that nature. It's bigger at professional levels and college levels than it is in high school."

Fitzsimmons participated in steeple chase at the high school level in New York and competed for USD in college. He held the steeple chase record, 9:14, at the school for 14 years until it was broken by the current assistant coach Matt Hoyt, and since then, Fitzsimmons' time now stands fourth all-time at the school. Most recently, Allen ran a 9:07 passing his coach.

Fitzsimmons says he looks for an athletic runner who has some hurdle experience when recruiting for the event. A handful of runners USD practice steeple chase, but only three runners currently compete in it

during meets, one man and two women.

"It's really a hard event to train for," Fitzsimmons said. "If you train over hurdles too much, it can break you down a little."

The steeple chasers will typically follow the same workout routine as other distance runners on the team and occasionally add hurdles.

"We'll have the same workout as another group of (runners) and we'll either do the hurdles every single time or we'll do hurdles for one lap and do the rest of the workout flat. It varies," Allen said.

The event sees a smaller field at meets.

"Usually it's a lot smaller of a field than, like a 1500 or

a 5k," Isaac said. "At the larger meets there's definitely a large field. At our national meet, for the first round it's a total of 48 people, three different heats with 16 people in each heat. It can get pretty decent size."

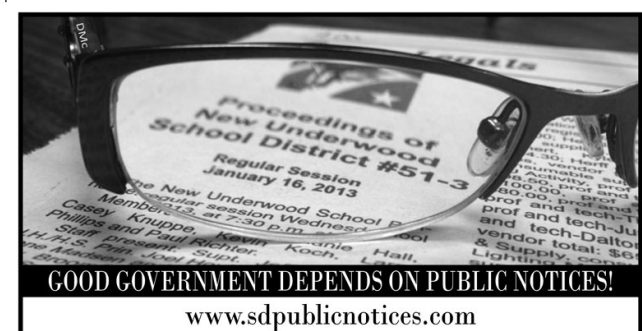
Right now, Isaac needs to cut his time down by only a few seconds to qualify for the national meet.

"Right now, I'm sitting right on the edge of the national meet. The top 48 make it and I think I'm 52nd or 53rd," Allen said.

USD track and field will compete at the Howard Wood Relays in Sioux Falls May 1-2 followed by the Nebraska Invitational in Lincoln, Nebraska on May 7.

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