

An All-Around Athlete

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Around high school, it's common to see athletes begin to specialize in one sport, but Lonna (Larsen) Thelen didn't have to choose.

Thelen was a multi-sport athlete at Vermillion and excelled in all three: volleyball, basketball and track.

"When I was at Vermillion, it was just great support from the community," Thelen said. "I think you get a lot more of a chance to excel in a small town."

Her accomplishments are evident in the list of awards and achievements while a Tanager, including most valuable player in each sport, All-State teams in basketball and volleyball and breaking school records in high jump, 400-meter dash and 4x400 relay team.

Thelen won state track medals in all four years at Vermillion, including first in the 800 meter run in as a freshman, and first on the high jump as a sophomore. She was also part of the 1998 state championship volleyball team.

Aside from the athletic achievements, Thelen played first chair clarinet and saxophone in the school's jazz band while maintaining a 4.0 GPA. She credits a lot of success to the teammates and community support she had while at Vermillion.

"One of the first values I found was teamwork," Thelen said during the induction ceremony. "Teamwork was learned on and off the court and has really gotten me to where I am today. To learn from other teammates, to encourage each other on and off the court. I really had some great teammates in my time at Vermillion High School and I really enjoyed them. Today when I work with other people, learning from them and encouraging them is part of my life."

Thanks to her achievements while at Vermillion, Thelen was selected to the inaugural class of the Tanager Hall of Fame in early May.

"I was really honored to be part of the inaugural group," Thelen said.

And, not only is she part of the first class, Thelen is also the only



BY ELYSE BRIGHTMAN/ FOR THE PLAIN TALK
Vermillion High School graduate Lonna (Larsen) Thelen was inducted into the first class of the Tanager Hall of Fame on May 2. Thelen excelled in volleyball, track and basketball while at Vermillion and is the only female in the Hall of Fame.

female inductee.

"I competed with a lot of great female athletes at Vermillion and I am very humbled," Thelen said. "I have a few nominations for the next year because I think there are other girls who are deserving of it."

Thelen went on to Augustana College in Sioux Falls where she earned a degree in math with a business and physics minor and was a member of the women's basketball team for four years.

"Without that support and training

(from Vermillion) I wouldn't have had the opportunity to go on and play there," Thelen said.

She then earned her master's degree in urban planning from the University of Kansas.

Thelen currently lives in Colorado Springs, Colorado and works as an urban planner. Sports aren't out of her life, however. Thelen is a member of the Women's Mountain Bike Associate of Colorado Springs race team.

"It's given me to ability to be on a team again," she said.

Grey Sox Top Expos in Final Tune-Up

FOR THE PLAIN TALK

The Vermillion Grey Sox topped the defending state "B" champions Wynot Expos in their final exhibition match of the 2015 season 4-3 in Wynot, Nebraska on Thursday, May 14.

The Sox used 12 hits along with a handful of Expo errors to score the four runs and hold off a late charge by the home squad.

Jay Thaler and Jon Merrigan, both Vermillion High School alums, teamed up for the best outing of the year for the Greys. Thaler went seven innings for the Sox, recording one strike out and giving up four hits.

"This was a great outing for Thaler," said manager Mike Moran. "He kept the ball low throughout the game and started hitters out with strikes, which was key to get them down in the count right away. Our defense was solid behind Jay on the mound all night."

After walking the first batter in the bottom of the eighth, with the score 4-2, Thaler was removed and Merrigan stepped in to throw the remaining two innings. Merrigan struck out one and only allowed three hits, all of which were in the ninth when the Expos looked to tie the game.

Defensive plays helped Merrigan get the save and give the Grey Sox the win.

Leading the charge for the Grey Sox was Merrigan and Grant Lueders. Merrigan, who was the designated hitter until he entered the game as relief pitcher, was 3-4 with two doubles, a single and two RBIs. Right fielder Lueders was also 3-4 with a double and two singles. Tanner Anderson chipped in a first inning double and Joe Mazour had two hits in his five at bats.

Up next for the Grey Sox will be State Line League action both at home and on the road.

The Grey Sox take on the Harrisburg Woodies on Wednesday, May 27 at Prentis Park in Vermillion. First pitch is scheduled for 7:30 p.m.

The Grey Sox's first road game of the year will be Sunday, May 31 in Larchwood, Iowa against the Larchwood Diamonds beginning at 2 p.m.

LOCAL SPORTS NEWS

MG: Men's Golf Ends Season At NCAA Regionals

BREMERTON, Wash.—South Dakota's men's golf team finished in 14th place with a three-round total score of 898 (+34) at the NCAA Bremerton Regional. A total of 75 golfers from 14 teams and five individuals competed over three days at the Gold Mountain Golf Course in Bremerton.

Sophomore Cody Seal led South Dakota throughout the regional. He had 71 strokes on Saturday for a total score of 218, which placed him in a three-way tie for 30th.

With the Coyotes low round on Saturday, freshman Matthew Swanson's six birdies moved him up the individual rankings 15 spots to 46th place. Swanson shot a total of 222.

Washington's Cheng-Tsung Pan won the individual title with 203 strokes. UAB, South Carolina, Southern California, TCU and Washington secured the top-five team spots and advance to the finals in Bradenton, Fla.

This was the Coyotes' first appearance at an NCAA regional meet since 2003 and the program's first at the Division I level.

Matthew Named To Academic All-Summit League Team

ELMHURST, Ill.—South Dakota senior Sam Matthew is one of five players on the Academic All-Summit League Team announced today by the league office.

Matthew is a business finance major with a 3.32 grade point average. He finished third at The Summit League Championship while helping South Dakota to its first team title and NCAA Division I regional appearance.

Matthew recorded the league's fourth-best stroke average (73.6) and notched seven top-five placings, including a victory and a pair of runner-up finishes.

To be eligible for the Academic All-League Team, a student-athlete must have a cumulative GPA of at least 3.30, completed at least one full academic year at the current institution and participated in 50 percent of their team's competitions. The votes are cast by a panel of each institution's faculty athletics representatives and sports information directors.

T&F: South Dakota Finishes Runner-Up At Summit League Championships

MACOMB, Ill.—South Dakota's men's and women's track and field teams finished runner-up at the Summit League Outdoor Track and Field Championships, which concluded Friday at Hanson Field after three days of competition.

Taking home Men's Track Championship MVP honors for his performances in the middle distance races was sophomore Mach Dojiok. Freshman Shanice Cannigan earned Women's Newcomer of the Championship to add to her indoor newcomer accolade.

The Coyotes added nine individual champions on Friday for a total of 14.

Senior Taylor Chapman got the Coyotes rolling as he cruised to a win in the 1,500-meter run. Chapman led from the gun and clocked 3 minutes, 52.31 seconds. Right on his heels was Dojiok, finishing runner-up in 3:52.98. Junior Isaac Allen and senior Stephen Nielson both clocked under four minutes as well to take fourth and sixth, respectively.

A little more than an hour later, Dojiok came from the back of the pack and outkicked three runners in the final stretch to win the 800 meters in 1:52.04. Chapman finished sixth, senior Taylor Huseman took seventh and Nielson was eighth.

Freshman Gawain Williams put on the jets in the last 50 meters to snatch the 100-meter dash title in 10.64 seconds.

South Dakota took four of the top-five spots in the men's pole vault. Senior Kevin Sarekhkhani won his second Summit League pole vault title by clearing 16-4. Junior teammate Erik Jorgensen finished runner-up with a height of 15-10. Junior Peter Chapman and freshman Jake David both went over 15-4 ¼ for fourth and fifth, respectively.

Senior Lukas Bernard came from behind to clock a new career best of 51.87 and win the 400-meter hurdles. Bernard improves to 34th on the NCAA West Preliminary performance list. Senior teammate Erik Hill had the lead on the final straightaway, but was outkicked by Bernard to finish in third. Hill also ran a new career best of 52.10, which puts him 43rd in the NCAA West. Freshman Tomas Kamenik took eighth.

Victorious in one of two photo finishes, junior Analisa Huschle captured the 200 meters in 24.57 seconds. Her final burst in the 100 meters was not quite enough and she took second in 11.92 seconds.

Senior Cody Snyder broke a 23-year-old Summit League Championship meet record in the discus when he launched it 190-5. Sophomore Dustin Valind placed seventh.

The Coyotes also grabbed titles in both 5,000-meter races.

Defending champion junior Amber Eichkorn completed her distance double when she won the 5,000 meters in career-best fashion. Eichkorn led from the gun, forcing separation in the field as she clocked a final time of 16:16.48. Junior Kelsey Barrett earned all-league honors, placing third in 16:51.21. Freshman Bethany Kozak took fourth.

Junior Mubarik Musa took the lead mid-race and never looked back en route to winning the 5,000 meters in 14:44.08. Senior Brant Haase placed fifth with a time of 15:02.97.

Five Coyotes won events on Wednesday and Thursday: Eichkorn (10,000 meters), junior Hunter Wilkes (pole vault), senior Megan Glisar (high jump), Huschle (long jump) and sophomore Tyler Frank (high

jump).

Cannigan had two runner-up performances. She finished the 400-meter hurdles in 1:00.64 and was edged out in the 100 hurdles by .01, clocking a final time of 14.61 seconds. Senior Molly Ervin and sophomore Ashley Thompson took fifth and sixth, respectively, in the 100 hurdles.

In addition to his personal best in the 400 hurdles, Hill clocked a career best 14.44 seconds in the 110 hurdles to finish runner-up. He caught two runners between the final hurdle and the tape. Kamenik and sophomore Hank Lentsch finished seventh and eighth.

Junior Katie Wetzstein had a pair of all-league performances in the 800 and 1,500 meters. Wetzstein ran a career best of 2:10.64 for runner-up in the 800 meters. She was outkicked in the final lap of the 1,500 meters for third place in 4:25.52. Sophomore Nicole Schmidt was right behind in both races, placing sixth in the 800 meters and eighth in the 1,500. Senior Rachel Weinandt took seventh in the 800 after running a career best 2:12.81 in the preliminaries to qualify.

To lead relay performances, the women's 4x400-meter relay finished runner-up in 3:44.00. The women's and men's 4x100 relays both earned all-league honors in third. The men's 4x400 relay placed fifth.

Senior Amber Watson ran a career best of 55.85 seconds to take fourth in the 400 meters. Freshman teammate Brooke Ireland clocked 55.93 for sixth, but ran a career best of 55.75 in the preliminaries.

In addition to his win in the 400 hurdles, Bernard placed fifth in the 400 meters with a time of 49.08.

Sophomore Ashley Thompson placed fourth in the triple jump with a leap of 39-1 ¼. A Summit League high jump champion, Glisar added points for the Coyotes when she jumped 39-5 ¼ for fifth. Freshman Collette Christensen was eighth.

Junior Connor Fitzsimmons jumped 45-2 ¼ to take fifth in the triple jump.

Adding a point for the Coyotes, sophomore Danielle Waldner took eighth in the discus.