



Kylen Freidel struggles to gain yardage during a running play Friday against Harrisburg defenders. The Tanager ground game struggled with only 69 yards accumulated in 28 rushes. Freidel led Vermillion's ground game with 37 yards in 10 carries. (Photo by David Lias)

Tanagers suffer tough loss to Harrisburg

By Parker Knox
Sportswriter

In the final six days of the football regular season starting tonight, Vermillion's gridiron Tanagers will face a pair of teams which have been going in opposite directions so far this fall.

The Tanagers, having completed their home schedule with a tough 13-3 loss to Harrisburg last Friday, hit the road to Madison tonight, then retrace their steps to West Central next Thursday.

Now 2-4, Vermillion has to be wary of walking into a trap at Madison. The Bulldogs stand at 0-6 but have played a dynamite schedule that includes losses to powerhouses Sisseton, Dell Rapids, West Central and Harrisburg. They were outscored in those four games by 160-12. Madison also lost by two points

to Hot Springs and by 13 to Lennox last week.

"We have to continue to improve and get a win on the road against another Big 8 Conference rival," said Coach Gary Culver in assessing Game No. 7. "It is usually a close, hard-fought contest no matter the records of the two teams. Madison is always ready to play Vermillion, so we need to be highly motivated for this game."

Meanwhile, next Thursday's regular-season finale opponent, West Central, is rolling along as usual with a 6-0 record with wins over Harrisburg, Milbank, Belle Fourche, Madison, Lennox and Jackson County Central.

The Tanagers, after an admitted step backward in a loss to Dell Rapids the previous week, came out ready to play inspired football against Harrisburg, a

heavily favored opponent, and they did just that.

"I was extremely happy that we played very hard the entire game against Harrisburg," Culver said. "Defensively we played inspired football throughout the contest, other than the two touchdown runs we gave them in the first and third quarters. Our specialty team play was also very solid in all phases of the game."

The Tanager ground game struggled with only 69 yards accumulated in 28 rushes, and therein lies room for improvement.

"We need to be able to move the ball consistently on the offensive side and string some first downs together," Culver said. "This is one area we will work

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Kicking woes sink Coyotes on D-Day

By Jeremy Hoeck
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Whether it was defensive lapses in crucial situations, an inability to score when given chances or simply dropped interceptions, there are areas to focus on in the dramatic loss for the University of South Dakota football team.

But it was kicks — or missed kicks, to be exact — that sealed the deal.

A blocked extra point in overtime followed by a UC Davis touchdown and a game-winning extra point propelled the visitors past USD 24-23 in a thriller Saturday afternoon in front of 9,884 fans on homecoming in the Dakota-Dome.

"This is a tough one to lose," said USD coach Ed Meierkort, who suffered his third home loss in six years. "I feel bad for our kids, they played hard."

The loss, USD's first on D-Days since 2000, overshadowed a two-touchdown comeback in the second half by the Coyotes (3-3), who fell to 0-2 in the Great West Conference.

Tied 17-17 after regulation, USD began the overtime session with a drive that brought the Coyotes down to the 2-yard line. Senior quarterback Noah Shepard then scored on a short rush, giving USD a 23-17 lead.

On came freshman walk-on kicker Sam Sawyer for the extra point try. However, the kick was blocked by Davis lineman Jacob Maxson, eliciting smattering of boos from the Dome crowd. It was the third missed kick in the game, as Sawyer had two earlier field goals sail wide right.

In the last two seasons, USD has tried to find the right solution at the kicker position. Last year it was transfer Justin Veazie, and this season, the Coyotes have used wide receiver Dustin Nowotny in that role, as well as Sawyer. "We can't kick the ball; we're not good enough at that spot," Meierkort said. "We have a scholarship kicker not kicking because he's not good enough. Then we put a young kid in there and he kicked as hard as he could, but missed it."

Still, the Coyotes had a chance to win even after the blocked kick.

With the ball on the following possession, the Aggies lost one yard on three plays, setting up a fourth-and-11 at the 26. Ignoring the deafening Dome crowd, quarterback Greg Denham found wide receiver Chris Carter over the middle for a 23-yard completion.



UC Davis' Joe Trombetta is forced out of bounds by South Dakota linebacker Ryan Routh near the end of regulation play in the DakotaDome Saturday. Trombetta would later score a 2-yard touchdown in overtime. The Aggies' successful extra point attempt iced a 1-point, 24-23 overtime victory for UC Davis. USD kicker Sam Sawyer missed a 20-yard field goal at the end of the first half of the Great West Conference football game. Sawyer missed two short field goals and had a PAT kick blocked in overtime as UC Davis won 24-23 in overtime. (Photo by David Lias)

Two plays later, Joe Trombetta scored on a 2-yard touchdown and Sean Kelley kicked the game-winning extra point.

"We were less than inches from winning that game, but just came up short," said USD defensive lineman Wayne Curry, who recorded three sacks. "Like coach Meierkort has been saying, when we're playing good teams like this and we have opportunities in our hands, we've got to take advantage."

In the second half, at least, the Coyotes were the ones taking advantage.

Though Davis led 10-3 at halftime and later 17-3 midway through the third quarter, the USD offense found its groove and the Coyote defense was getting pressure on Denham.

At the 4:53 mark of the third quarter, Shepard capped off a 72-yard drive with a 7-yard touchdown to Nowotny. Following an Aggies' punt, the Coyotes needed just five plays to march 99 yards, ending with a 37-yard touchdown pass from Shepard to Ben Oberle.

Though Sawyer missed a 31-yard field goal with 4:26 to play in regulation, the USD defense forced the Davis offense to punt on the ensuing possession — which included a critical sack by Curry on a

third-and-10 play.

"I thought in the second half, we were pretty much in control," Meierkort said. "That was as good of an effort I've had defensively against a team like that."

The two teams combined to accumulate 918 yards of total offense, led by USD's 476. Shepard finished 20-of-30 for a season-high 311 yards and two touchdowns, while freshman Tom Flanagan caught five passes for 50 yards.

USD also rushed for 165 yards in the loss, led by 74 yards from Chris Ganious.

"I give full credit to South Dakota, they got down but kept fighting back," UC Davis coach Bob Biggs said. "Their kicking game let them down, but we left a lot of points on the table as well."

"We were lucky to come away with a win, to be honest."

In the win for UC Davis (2-3, 1-0 GWC), Denham — named the league's Offensive Player of the Week — passed for 380 yards and two touchdowns. Carter and Bakari Grant each caught six passes, while Grant had two touchdowns.

USD embarks on a two-week road trip, starting with next Saturday's contest at Montana State, followed by an Oct. 31 date with Northern Colorado.

The only question now is, how will the Coyotes respond to consecutive losses?

"We've got to put this behind us," said tight end London Landry, who caught three passes in Saturday's loss. "If we don't move on, this could haunt us for a long time. All we can do is get ready for the next game."

Munger's finish is highlight for Tanagers at state tennis tourney

By Parker Knox
Sportswriter

A sixth-place finish by Kayla Munger in Flight 2 singles competition was Vermillion's highlight at the state tennis tournament in Sioux Falls last weekend.

Munger won her first match over Lynsey Prosser of Sturgis, 6-2, 6-1, then lost to Kaitlyn Wright of Rapid City Stevens, 6-1, 6-0. She got on a roll in the consolation bracket, however, winning consecutive 10-3 matches over Mitchell's Josie Whelen, Julianna Diddle of Brookings and Brandon Valley's Tasha Nelson. Those wins put Munger in the fifth-place match against Pierre's Crystal Ortbahn where she lost, 10-1.

Four other Tanager singles contestants and all three doubles twosomes enjoyed the excitement of winning at least one match apiece at the state tournament.

Other VHS results:

Flight 1 singles, Claire Jones: def. Vander Sluis, Brookings, 7-5, 6-4. Lost to Moyle, R.C. Stevens, 6-3, 6-0. Lost to Christopherson, Huron, 10-7.

Flight 3 singles, Lindsay Robinet: lost to Niedert, Madison, 6-2, 6-0. Lost to Bohn, Mitchell, 10-7.

Flight 4 singles, Kasey Nielsen: lost to Erikson, S.F. Washington, 6-1, 6-2. Def. Freet, Madison, 10-0. Lost to VanMaanen, Yankton, 10-7.

Flight 5 singles, Dylan Daniels: first-round bye. Lost to Naasz, Brandon Valley, 6-7, 2-7, 6-2, 6-4. Def. Felix, Todd County, 10-0. Lost to Johnson, S.F. Roosevelt, 10-1.

Flight 6 singles, Kelly Nielsen: def. Smith, Spearfish, 6-0, 6-0. Lost to Hammerquist, R.C. Stevens, 6-0, 6-0. Def. Brekke, S.F. Washington, 10-0. Lost to Haibkat, Huron, 10-5.

Flight 1 doubles, Jones/Munger: def. Jackson/Young, Todd County, 10-05. Lost to Moyle/Wright, R.C. Stevens, 6-0, 6-0. Def. Randel/Deiter, Aberdeen Central, 11-10 (2). Lost to Sims/Porter, R.C. Central, 10-5.

Flight 2 doubles, Robinet/Daniels: def. Kreuz/Austin, Sturgis, 10-5. Lost to VanDemark/Hoffman, S.F. O'Gorman, 6-1, 6-0. Lost to Solberg/Kracht, Mitchell, 10-4.

Flight 3 doubles, Nielsen/Nielsen: def. Bergmann/Smith, Spearfish, 10-5. Lost to Burke/Inman, Pierre, 6-1, 6-4. Def. Banse/Thompson, R.C. Central, 10-5. Def. Barland/Kurtz, Milbank, 10-1. Lost to Henderson/Gill, Yankton, 11-9.

VHS soccer teams finish seventh, eighth at tourney

By Parker Knox
Sportswriter

Vermillion's girls won seventh place and the Tanager boys finished eighth in their respective state tournaments in Aberdeen last weekend.

Terrible field conditions, wind and unseasonably cold weather plagued all three days of the tournaments, which were won by St. Thomas More's girls for the third straight year and the Sturgis boys.

The Tanager girls lost their opener to Harrisburg, 7-2, after leading 2-1 and then losing a pair of key defenders due to illness. Vermillion fell to Sturgis, 2-0, in the consolation semifinals, so Saturday's win in the seventh-place contest was extremely satisfying.

"It was a sweet victory for our girls," said Coach Dave LaCombe after VHS won a spine-tingler in a shootout over Sioux Falls Christian. "We were playing in adverse conditions, and girls on both teams had to endure cold, wind and snow."

Megan Bottolfson scored Vermillion's initial goal, and Christian tied it up early in the second half. The game continued at 1-1 through regulation time and two scoreless overtimes, setting the stage for a shootout of penalty kicks. Bottolfson and Lacey Leichtnam scored for Vermillion, and Christian's PK artists also made two of their shots, so the score was tied until Vermillion's last kicker, Hannah Nehlich-Arobba worked the ball past the SFC keeper to win the game, 4-3.

The Tanagers, who finished the season at 4-7-1, received more accolades later when it was revealed the VHS team was the recipient of the Sportsmanship Award for the third time in the program's history. It was also the third time a LaCombe

team has won the award — twice with VHS and once as a Yankton coach.

"This is an honor to receive such a prestigious award," LaCombe said. He credited his seniors — Bottolfson, Leichtnam, Hannah Nehlich-Arobba and Sophie Nehlich-Arobba — who as co-captains brought leadership and guidance to his team.

Meanwhile, the Vermillion boys opened tourney play with a strong performance as the eighth seed against top-seed Sioux Falls Christian. The Tanagers played SFC to a tough 2-1 final score in Christian's favor. Levi James scored the VHS goal off a cross from Tanner Settles.

In the consolation semifinals Custer dealt a 3-0 loss to the Tanagers, who then lost to Groton, 4-1, in the seventh-place contest. Tim Tigert scored the Vermillion goal. Alex Robertson was in goal for all three state tourney games.

The boys' varsity loses only three players to graduation this year — Parker Erickson, Tim Tigert and Rory Rich.

Seven Vermillion players earned recognition when the All-State teams were announced. On the girls' side Hannah Nehlich-Arobba was named first-team All-State, Sophie Nehlich-Arobba second-team All-State, and Lacey Leichtnam and Megan Bottolfson honorable mention. On the boys' All-State squad, Levi James, completing an outstanding junior season, earned first-team All-State honors, Eric Storm was picked for the second team, and Tigert was accorded honorable mention.

Custer won the Sportsmanship Award for the boys' "A" tournament.

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