

# Tanager softball aims to get on track

**By Mark Upward**  
For the Plain Talk

The Vermillion Tanagers are looking forward to next Sunday when they host Watertown in a non-double header weekend.

The Tanagers (0-4) will host Watertown on the Armory Field at 12:30 p.m. and will hope to get in the win column having not yet done so this season.

There have been times this year when the Tanager players are in control of the game but are unable to close the door on their opponent.

"We have been ahead in games and it seems we get complacent and lose the lead," said Coach NAME Walters. "We have yet to put the whole game together."

That is just the scenario that happened against the Tea Area Titans on Sunday.

The Tanagers were ahead 3-0 in the fourth inning and were looking good as they headed into the fifth.

However, the Titans put runners on first and second in the bottom of the frame and both advanced on a passed ball.

With runners in scoring position, the next batter recorded a two-run hit and the floodgates opened.

Vermillion's Maddie Treiber pitched the complete game and had

three strikeouts. "We are still learning to play as a team and need to work together better," Treiber said after the game.

The coaching staff is hoping to use these games as a way to find the best spots on the field for the Tanager players.

"We are playing girls in different positions yet," Walters said. "We are giving different players a chance to play in different positions."

In the second game, Yankton took little time to take control of the game as a grand slam home run in the second inning gave the Yankton team a big lead in a 13-0 win.

The Tanagers used three pitchers in the game as Kylie Wood started. Maddie Treiber came in to relieve Wood in the second, with Maddie Wagner closing out the game in the fifth inning.

The Tanagers were unable to put any offense together and the game was called as the time limit for the contest expired.

Senior Mady Gilbertson summed up the Tanager season so far.

"We are looking to learn the process and to grow as a team using our practices to get better," she said.

This weekend won't see any letup as Watertown enters play as the third-ranked team in the state.



Yankton rolled to an easy win Sunday against the Vermillion Tanagers softball team.

Mark Upward / For the Plain Talk

## Eichkorn leads Coyotes to win

**By Scott Bormann**  
For the Plain Talk

USD's junior Amber Eichkorn led the Coyotes from the front in Sioux Falls last Friday at the Augustana Twilight meet.

Even though Eichkorn was awarded the Summit League's Women's Cross Country Athlete of the Week on Monday, the effort is still on team success instead of individual accomplishments.

They are all business. "It's an awesome feeling to win among 22 teams, especially when you look at what teams we were up against," junior Kelsey Barrett said. "I'd say I can speak on behalf of all the other girls to say that winning the Twilight meet was very exciting, but the next morning it just serves as a step forward and we are already thinking about what we'll do next."

The race at Yankton Trail Park in Sioux Falls was not run on your typical cross country course. Each lap was one mile long, and there were plenty of vantage points for spectators.

It was also a rare, night race. "The course was interesting," freshman Ryan Bauermeister said.

"After two meets, I feel like we are progressing nicely. We still have a lot of room for improvement and our athletes realize that these next three weeks of training can really benefit us come November."

### HEAD COACH DAN FITZSIMMONS

"With the course being mainly dark past the starting line, it took a lap or two to get used to the curves in the course."

The cool evening weather provided perfect conditions for a foot race. With 287 men and 266 women competing, this was the largest race the Coyotes have seen thus far this season.

The focus on team results is quite evident on both squads. Even with the accolades going to Eichkorn on the women's team and senior Brant Haase last week for the men's team, everyone is battling for the best possible team scores.

The third, fourth, and fifth runners were fighting to move up through the

pack until the very end. This effort put all five of the scorers for the women in the top 25 places, while the men stayed in the top 42 places.

"I usually can't get out as fast as the other girls, so I get out as well as I can and focus on finding a teammate and either carrying them, letting them carry me, or passing them to find the next one," Barrett said. "That way I know that if I'm not stepping it up to get into the top 25, I can do my best to make sure another teammate is."

Both the men's and women's teams have met with early season success, but they know that this is a long season. Their sights are set squarely on bigger prizes later in the season.

"After two meets, I feel like we are progressing nicely," head coach Dan Fitzsimmons said. "We still have a lot of room for improvement and our athletes realize that these next three weeks of training can really benefit us come November."

With three weeks off until their next competition on Sept. 27 at the Roy Griak Invitational in Minneapolis, Minn., the Coyotes will be pushing each other very hard to reach those lofty goals.

## Vermillion Tennis – Tough Schedule Ahead

**By Mark Upward**  
For the Plain Talk

The Vermillion High School Tanager girls' tennis team was off for over a week as they had no scheduled matches on the master schedule.

Then their scheduled trip Tuesday to Aberdeen was suspended due to inclement weather so the Vermillion girls were grounded for even longer.

"Not much has changed since our last report," said VHS head coach Betsy Hughes. "We took this down week to work hard on conditioning and strength which will help us to improve our core strength."

This extra conditioning will come in handy as the Tanagers have several matches scheduled in the next week and a half.

Hughes also used the down week to work on data collection in each girl's serve so they can compare the data as the season progresses.

This data will then be used to provide each girl

on the team a report on their serving prowess.

The Lady Tanagers travel to Brandon on Friday for the 10-team Brandon Valley Invitational and then host Dakota 12 conference foe Madison on Monday.

The Tanagers did pick up a player since the last competition that will help the team as the season progresses.

Libby Sykes was able to work tennis back into her schedule and returns as the No. 2 player back into the Tanager line-up in singles play. It also puts the duo of Abby Wies and Sykes back into the number one spot in doubles.

The Tanager tennis team is still a young team. Weis is the lone senior on the squad. The varsity squad has one senior, one sophomore, two freshman, and two eighth graders.

"There is always room to improve and my goal is to play better than last year both as an individual and as a team," Weis said.

## USD Soccer Returns To Comforts Of Home

**By Alan Dale**  
The Plain Talk

It will be a nice time to return home when the University of South Dakota women's soccer team discovers they will be playing in Vermillion this weekend.

Friday they take on Wyoming (1-4) from the Mountain West Conference at 4 p.m. at the USD Soccer Complex and then Sunday they will host 8th-ranked Creighton University (5-0) out of the Big East.

Kickoff is set for 1 p.m. "These games will be tough," Coyotes' head coach Mandy Green said. "Wyoming and Creighton will be the best, fastest, and most athletic teams we have played so far this year. Both teams will punish us if we make mistakes so we will need to start fast and stay strong throughout the game. Wyoming is more direct where Creighton will pass the ball around a little more. We will need to keep the ball, play fast, play smart, and play together to

be successful against both teams this weekend."

The Coyotes (4-2) come off a second consecutive split on the road. They followed up their Arkansas trip with a 1-1 record in Arizona this past weekend.

They defeated Grand Canyon last Friday 3-1 in blistering Phoenix, Arizona heat and then followed that up in the crisper, cooler heights of Flagstaff, Arizona where they dropped a 3-2 decision to previously winless Northern Arizona.

"Playing on Friday in 90 degrees and then traveling to Flagstaff to play in the altitude did affect us," Green said. "We got tired pretty quickly. Northern Arizona didn't play on Friday which didn't help."

The USD offense scored five goals over the weekend to come away with a bright spot.

"I was pleased by the goals we scored," Green said. "I think we were sloppy with the ball this weekend though and it cost us on Sunday. We have to

find a way to keep the ball more."

Those yips affected the Coyote defense.

"We kept turning the ball over so we gave them a lot more opportunities than we should have," Green said. "They did a good job capitalizing on the mistakes that we made."

The players feel positive about their trip and how they played.

"We did pretty good," junior Taylor Nivala said. "The elevation was pretty intense, but I thought we played pretty good and competitively in the second game, but it is what it is. For me it was definitely tough to catch my breath (in Flagstaff) at times. I say they had the advantage playing at altitude."

Overall Green came away with good vibes from the trip to the Grand Canyon State.

"Friday was a great come-from-behind win for us," Green said. "We played

well in the second half of the Northern Arizona game. We showed a lot of character coming from behind three different times to tie the game up. We fought hard and showed a lot of grit. We need to eliminate the mistakes so we aren't coming from behind all of the time.

"We were able to see a different part of the country and experience some of the things that are only in Arizona which is always fun."

Now the squad has to take a step up in competition.

"We're feeling pretty good and have a good chance of beating those two teams," Nivala said. "We are playing well and I think we have a good opportunity. We're feeding off each other and we know what people want to do before they think of doing it. There is a lot of positive energy around this team."

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