

Tanagers stand 2-2 at bye week; fall to Tea

By Alan Dale

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A 2-2 record with a chance to clinch a Region 2 playoff home game still in the cards is not a bad start to a Vermillion High School football season.

Sure the Tanagers started 2-0 and have fallen on harder times the past two weeks with losses at top-ranked West Central and last week, at home, against Tea Area.

Still this is a squad that was ranked 4th in Class A before the West Central defeat and with a win next week in the DakotaDome against Dakota Valley, they would host a playoff game regardless of what occurs over the final three weeks of the campaign.

Things are looking up even though the team has had to slog through some difficult times aided by a number of injuries.

"We knew with any injuries there would be some setbacks with how young our team is and that is what has happened in the last two games along with some other things as well," Tanager head coach Andy Homan said. "As far as having everything put in on both sides of the ball we are right where we want to be. When we are healthy we as a team are doing what we expected we could do, when we have the injuries like we do, we need to do a better job of having our younger guys ready to step in and be ready to make plays."

One obvious positive aspect this season has been the team's attitude heading into the games against West Central and Tea Area.

"We believed we could beat both of those teams, not just one of them," Homan said. "How do we digest them? We forget about them, because there is nothing we can do about them now. We learn from our mistakes and talk about ways to improve moving forward. We know what happened in both games and look to correct the issues this week."

The Tanagers' passing game led by quarterback

Jack Brown came out red hot over the first two games only to see it cool quite a bit in recent weeks.

"The passing game tends to struggle when you have to move guys around and some of your key receivers get hurt or banged up," Homan said. "We have also been dropping balls and some miscues on were to throw the ball. A lot of this comes around guys playing in different spots and relying heavily on young guys stepping up and making plays."

Despite a number of banged up bodies and maybe, slightly, bruised egos, the Tanagers have a schedule left that easily could turn into a .500 or above season if everything comes together.

"The guys are going hard and are fighting on every play," Homan said. "They come to practice every day wanting to get better and learn from their mistakes. They have a lot of heart and still some room to grow, but these guys have shown they are a great brotherhood. I like how close we are as a team and everyone is able to pick each other up during times that it is needed."

With a bye this week the Tanagers will work on just getting better than ever.

"This week we will get back to fixing what needs fix and towards the end of the week they will get some time off," Homan said. "Which gives everyone, staff and players, some time to step away from the game and spend time with family, refocus and come back to work hungry for more."

A Look Back at Homecoming (as seen online)

This wasn't what Homecoming was supposed to look like.

The Vermillion Tanagers wanted more, expected more, from their Friday night contest against Tea Area.

It was the Tanagers' turn to rule Region 2. The Tea Titans were supposed to move aside.

For now, that still won't happen.



Vermillion High School's Brandon Mockler (40) runs hard during the Tanagers' 41-14 Homecoming loss to Tea Area.

Thomas Hatzenbuehler / For The Plain Talk

The Titans broke free of a 14-14 tie late in the first half to score 27 unanswered walk-off points to pull away for a relatively easy 41-14 Dakota 12 win.

Vermillion (2-2) didn't make things easy for themselves as they allowed Tea to gain five first downs off of Tanager penalties and the Titan passing game completed only seven passes but for a monster 244 yards after a relatively slow start.

"Tea came ready to play after we started off huge with that inside kick and got momentum in our favor," Homan said. "We just started beating ourselves with penalties and a lot of them personal fouls and that killed us. Second-and-five and now it's second-and-25, second-and-30. We are killing ourselves right now."

"We are our own worst enemies and that's what hurting us right now."

The Tanagers started the second half with a decent

drive, an even better punt, and ideal defensive field position.

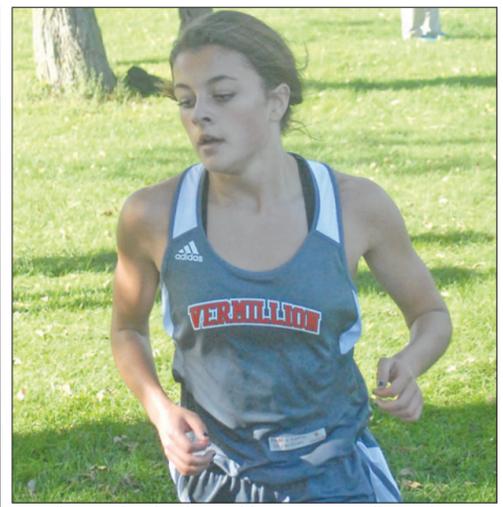
Tea was backed to its own goal line and needing a big defensive stop down 21-14, the Tanagers would be tested.

They wouldn't pass it as Tea churned chunks of yardage and wrapped up a 99-yard drive with a 24-yard scoring strike from Payton Conrad to Jordan Fechner to go up two touchdowns, 27-14.

The Titans continued to take advantage of Vermillion penalties and missed opportunities.

Tea (3-1) also survived the 132 yards rushing by Regan Bye, who did the heavy lifting behind 29 carries. He finished with 51 percent of the Tanager offense.

"Regan has a lot of heart and enough heart to carry this team, as much as he wants to," Homan said. "Without him some big plays don't happen. With a kid like that you just watch him go."



Vermillion High School's Maddie Lavin ran well Monday.

James D. Cimburek/Yankton Press & Dakotan

Lavin excels in Alcester

By Alan Dale

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Vermillion High School's Maddie Lavin rolled to the individual title at the Alcester-Hudson cross country invitational Monday afternoon.

The defending state Class A champion Lavin, a freshman, ran a 15:41.17 to win the title by nearly a full half-minute ahead of Hanna Wahil of West Central.

Vermillion's girls' team finished in seventh-place with 68 points, while Canton won the crown with 19 points.

Melissa Mikkelson (20:53.91) and Brittney Sweeney (20:54.89) also ran for the Tanagers.

Parson Covington (18:00.91) finished in 14th place for the Vermillion boys as they took fifth-place (64 points) in Alcester.

West Central easily won the title with 12 points.

Justin Sorenson (18:46.00), Trey Hage (18:52.34), Nolan McQuistan (20:11.35), and Landon Smith (21:05.37) were the other top five runners for the Tanagers.

September 18 in Sioux

Falls, the Tanagers also competed at the Charger Invitational Cross Country Meet at Paisley Park.

Lavin finished fourth for the girls (16:10.52) behind the pace set by three Madison girls led by Emily Hawkes' (15:12.08) time.

Melissa Mikkelson (21:42.79) also ran at the meet.

The boys took seventh out of eight places in Sioux Falls as the eighth-grader Covington led the way with an 18:52.31 time, good for 19th place.

The young Tanagers also saw scoring results by Sorenson (19:55.93), Hage (20:15.94), Ben Finnegan (21:52.70), and Smith (22:10.56). All but Hage, who is a freshman, are eighth-graders.

"It was a perfect day for running and the kids stepped up and performed well," Vermillion head coach Kelly Fischbach said. "Maddie took control of the race from the start and never looked back. She ran with confidence and it showed in her performance. Times were significantly better across the board for our kids."

Tanager boys' soccer wraps season Saturday

Coming off of a dramatic, but successful 5-3 loss at Tea Area on Saturday, the Vermillion High boys' soccer team is set for a strong season finish.

This weekend, on Saturday, the Tanagers (2-2-1) play host to Chamberlain for a 3 p.m. kickoff at Cotton Park to wrap the regular season.

That game comes two days after the Vermillion boys travelled to Sioux City Christian.

The result of that match was not available at press time.

Please check www.plaintalk.net for a

final recap of the match.

Vermillion defeated hosts Chamberlain 8-0 on Sept. 6.

Against Tea, VHS head coach Curt Nelson was encouraged.

"It was a really good game actually," Nelson said. "Overall we played a solid game, fighting hard until the final whistle."

"The game was closer than the score indicates and it was really fun to watch."

Jonathan Sloth scored the first goal for Vermillion who went into the half-

time tied 1-1.

The game was tied at 2-2 in the second half when Seth Druin responded to an earlier Titan goal.

Tea scored three unanswered goals to go up 5-2 before Joe Miller made accounted for the final goal of the day to pull the Tanagers back to within two.

"This was a good performance to get us ready for our next game against Sioux Falls Christian," Nelson said. "Both teams will play back-to-back and it should be our toughest test all season."

■ FIND

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brings the whole team down. We just need to think as a team, play as a team, and work as a team only."

The four set saw some cosmetic changes to the Tanager lineup after they lost a one-set lead behind two lethargic sets of play immediately after.

Sophomores Morgan Herbster, Kasey Madsen, and Amanda Finnegan came out to play significant roles in the fourth set. Finnegan played libero alongside freshman Emily Bye who teamed up with the rest of the lineup as the Tanagers' setter.

The group showed some spirit taking an early 7-5 lead before the more experienced Tea lineup assumed command.

"That was good and it was fun to play as a team, we just need to finish sets," Finnegan said. "We need to

practice more and put more girls out in practice and play more together."

Trailing 14-10, members of the Vermillion starting lineup slowly made their way back into the rotation.

Unfortunately, Tea Area was in a groove no Tanager lineup seemed able to slow down.

"We have a lot of young kids who are going to be ready and probably have to get them prepared to be ready before they are ready," Billberg said. "They played well. Emily came in and set well for us. Kacey really went after it."

"Caitlin blocked and scored well for us too. We just lack that total team cohesion to make things happen. When we play together we score all the time. We can have a 10-point swing in score where two negative plays can cause a quick change."

Rachel Finnegan had eight kills and Siegel had seven to lead the Tanager offense. Kayla Stammer had 13 assists, Siegel and Sydney

Peters each had three blocks and Finnegan had 22 digs while Jessica Brady added 18 digs.

"We know we can do it, we just have to do it play after play after play," Billberg said. "Part of it is being together, working together, and wanting to win so much that they will do whatever it takes to win. When you see one player doing that, a second player will jump in, then a third. When you have all 16 players on the same wagon."

"Right now we have a lot of different wagons."

After a slow start the Tanagers got their offense going and built a 20-16 lead in the first set.

They increased their lead to 22-17 on a Rachel Finnegan winning joust and a Melanie Lecates ace.

The Titans pulled with 23-21 but a double roof by Chloe Nielsen and Siegel and another by Sydney Peters and Siegel wrapped up the first set 25-21.

Second set play started like the previous one with Tea getting the early edge.

Once more Vermillion rallied.

This time Tea answered in time and pushed its lead to 17-12 as the inconsistent Tanager passing showed itself.

Tea then won the 31st point behind some ridiculous defensive play to go up 18-13.

That was enough as Tea tied the match with a 25-17 set two win.

Mother mojo stayed on Tea's side to start the third set as they ran out to a 5-0 lead.

Things didn't improve as the Titans upped their edge to 11-1 to force a second timeout in the set.

Vermillion got a bit pluckier but Tea wouldn't budge much, holding a nice-sized lead.

Tea won set three in emphatic fashion, 25-10 to take control.

"If we put it together we can go all the way," Siegel said. "We can do whatever. We just need to take advantage of what happens in the moment and not worry about what happened."

The JV team dropped a 2-0 (25-22, 25-12) decision to the Titans while the Vermillion freshmen rallied for a 2-1 (22-25, 25-19, 15-11) win.

COMING ATTRACTIONS (SEPT. 26-OCT 3)

Friday, Sept. 26
COLLEGE VOLLEYBALL — North Dakota State at SOUTH DAKOTA, 7 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 27
HIGH SCHOOL BOYS SOCCER — Chamberlain at VERMILLION, 3 p.m.

Sunday, Sept. 28
COLLEGE VOLLEYBALL — Oral Roberts at SOUTH DAKOTA, 1 p.m.

Monday, Sept. 29
HIGH SCHOOL VOLLEYBALL — VERMILLION at Wagner, 7:30 p.m.

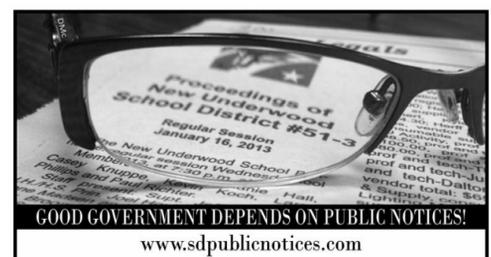
HIGH SCHOOL TENNIS — Mitchell at VERMILLION, 4 p.m.
HIGH SCHOOL BOYS GOLF — VERMILLION at

Region 2A meet (Sioux Falls)
Tuesday, Sept. 30
HIGH SCHOOL VOLLEYBALL — Sioux Falls Christian at VERMILLION, 7:30 p.m.

HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS SOCCER —

VERMILLION at State Class A quarterfinals, TBD

Thursday, Oct. 2
HIGH SCHOOL VOLLEYBALL — West Central at VERMILLION, 7:30 p.m.



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■ WEISS

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is a transferable skill that will serve Abby in everything she does. In Abby's match against Yankton (last week), she proved that she is able to do this. She stayed tough throughout her match and painted the lines to the very end. I am very proud of her."

Weiss admits she doesn't always have the perfect answers in the mental game.

"I get stuck in my head when I make a couple of wrong moves and I play worse," "It's been hard to get over that."

She did cite that on Friday during a tough loss to Yankton at No. 1 she did improve that particular part of her game.

"I didn't think about winning or losing, I just wanted to play really well," Weiss said. "I guess that worked in my favor because I played a lot better."

It is Weiss' strong persona that brings out the pride in Hughes. It is her senior's character that emanates and only benefits a young team going through some struggles this season.

"Abby has a great attitude about playing our top flight," Hughes said. "Though we all know this is a tough spot to be in, Abby never complains. She is our only senior. Our No. 2 player, Libby, is a soph-

omore. Then we have three freshmen and an 8th-grader to fill out our varsity squad.

Abby is providing an example for our younger players of always showing up to do your best even when the odds are against you."

That doesn't deter Weiss from being a fierce opponent.

"Abby is a ferocious and competitive player," Hughes said. "It sometimes seems she is playing in a stacked deck in that every school we play has a tennis beast playing at flight one. Since we are one of, if not the, smallest schools that has a tennis team, this often places Abby against incredibly tough opponents."

Having played No. 1 since her sophomore year, after a freshmen campaign where a majority of upperclassmen quit and she had to play No.3 singles, Weiss has learned a lot of being a top player through trial by fire.

"It's hard to play No. 1 because you don't want to disappoint your team by losing," Weiss said. "Most number ones have better backhand, forehands, and serves all the way around."

Weiss admits she couldn't play a sport where large crowds attend. She enjoys the simple pleasures of tennis as her high school career winds down after playing since she was seven-years old.

"I just want to have fun with it," she said. "Because that's all you are going to remember 20 years from now."

Candidate Debates

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- Oct. 16: U.S. House candidates
- Oct. 23: U.S. Senate candidates

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