After 'Playing With' Opponents In '10, Tanagers Look To Dominate This Season

BY CLAY STODDARD
sports@yankton.net

VERMILLION — The Vermillion Tanagers girls volleyball team had a rough season in 2010, at least that is what it looks like on paper. With a 3-20 record and a loss to Elk Point-Jefferson in the first round of the District 8A Tournament the season seemed rough.

Lenni Billberg, head coach for the Tanagers, has a different idea about last season,

"We had a tough year last year, but we played with all of our opponents, we were in every game, we just couldn't grab the win," Billberg said. "We were very young, a team that was led by juniors and sophomores."

The Tanagers are looking to grow out of the ashes of last season and use the experience gained. With a returning team that is almost the same as the team last year, the team is excited and ready to achieve some new goals.

"Our first goal is to dominate games, to walk in every game and dominate, whether it is a great Minnesota school or one of the weakest South Dakota schools. We want to dominate games, we don't want to play with people. Statistical goals, we definitely have those as well," Billberg said.

"We also have some goals set on finishing games. We have some rewards to achieve when we reach certain points in a game throughout the year and we have set things to get to that, but our number one goal is to dominate games," Billberg added.

The Tanagers will be led by a strong senior class and a confident junior class. Lexi Regnerus, Beth Szymonski, Lizzie Bye, and Kylie Fischbach will be the leaders of the senior class for Vermillion.

"The senior class as a whole wants more out of every day of practice, we are not just looking on how we can improve from game to game, we are looking to improve daily," said Billberg.

The junior leaders for the team will be Kattie Herrera, Steph Erwin, and the defensive libero, Blair Gilkyson, who is also a cross country athlete for the Tanagers this fall.

"We also have some promising underclassmen this season who are working hard and will have to do so to see if they can compete with that great crop of seniors that we have this year," Billberg said.

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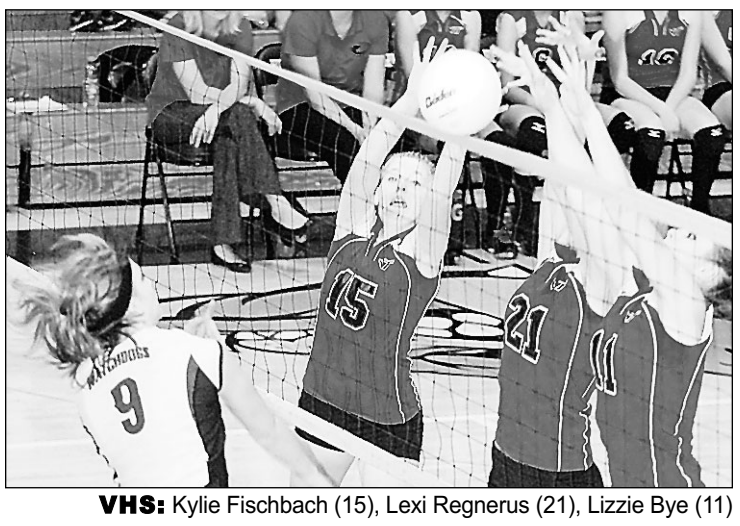

VHS: Kylie Fischbach (15), Lexi Regnerus (21), Lizzie Bye (11)

VHS Golfers Hope Off-Season Work Pays Off In State Tourney Run On Their Home Course

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article was originally published in our Aug. 16 edition. It has been modified to reflect competition since its publication.

BY CASSIE BARTLETT
sports@yankton.net

VERMILLION — While most students are enjoying their last few weeks of summer, the Vermillion boys' golf team has been hard at work preparing for their first golf meet.

The Tanagers teed off the season Aug. 16, and although they only had a week of practice, head coach Kirk Hogen said the early start benefits the golfers.

"This is a good decision by the state. We're starting a week early — it makes it a little hard on the kids because some families are still trying to take vacations and we have three kids that are still playing baseball," Hogen said. "At the same time, when you get to October it's nice to know you're not dealing with some really cold weather. That was the whole idea behind starting golf a week earlier than what it used to be."

Last year, Vermillion struggled without experienced players and didn't finish how they team had hoped. This season, Hogen said he's looking to build on experience and skill.

"It wasn't a real good season for us last year, we didn't even get a team into the state tournament which is very unusual for us," he said. "We're definitely a rebuilding program. We've lost some leaders over the years and we've got a very young team, we're just going to try to improve on what we did last year."

With mainly underclassmen on the team, and even some eighth graders, the Tanagers central target is to progress throughout the year.

"Our main goal is to always do the best that we can do everyday. I don't care if you have the best team in the state, you'd be ridiculous not to try to improve," Hogen said. "Right now, the key for us is going to be bringing some of these young players along. We don't have a heavy burden of older experienced golfers - we only have one senior."

Even after not taking a squad to state, Hogen isn't concerned with where other teams stand.

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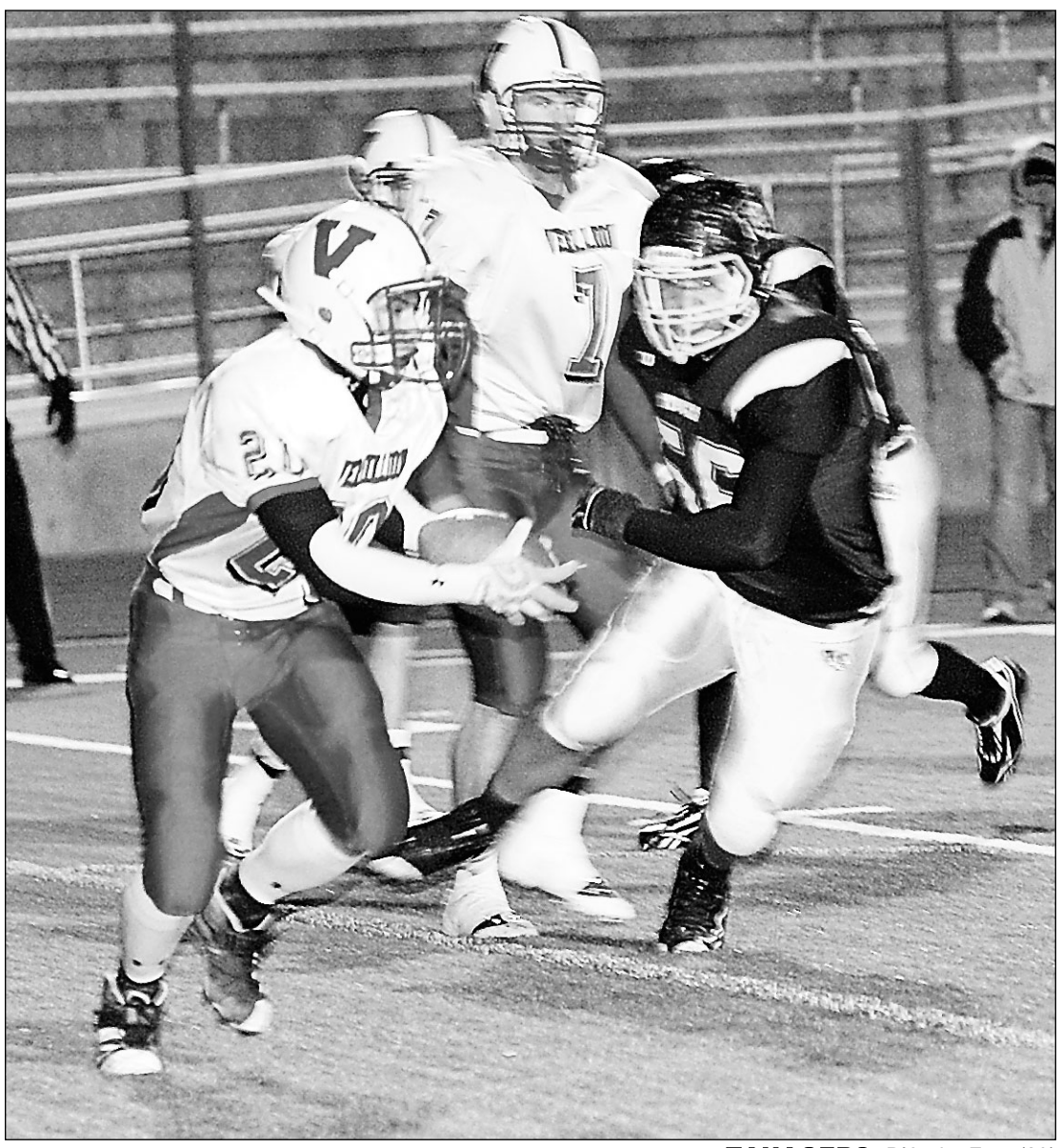
Tanagers Face Tough Schedule



TANAGERS: D'Andre Fore (20)

BY CODY BALL
sports@yankton.net

VERMILLION — The Vermillion Tanagers will be taking the field this year with a young team facing a daunting schedule. Don't count the Tanagers out, though, as they are being led against that tough schedule by some very capable players.

Last year, the Tanagers had their season ended in the first round of the post-season in a loss to Harrisburg. This loss dropped their season record to an uncharacteristic 3-6. Head coach Gary Culver, who is entering his 35th year as the head of the Vermillion football squad, felt the record was reflective of the brutal schedule they had to endure.

"Our season was somewhat disappointing, but we faced an uphill battle all year," Culver said. "Our schedule was extremely tough. It was one of the toughest schedules that any 11A school faced, if not the toughest."

The tough schedule trend continues for Vermillion, but a few changes may benefit the Tanagers greatly. Off the schedule from last year are St. Thomas More out of Rapid City and Dell Rapids. The subtraction of St. Thomas More means the Tanagers will not have to make the grueling trip out west to face a very formidable football team as well as battling road weariness. The subtraction of Dell Rapids is beneficial because the Quarriers were Class 11A state champions last year, and bring back another solid team. To replace those two games, the Tanagers added Dakota Valley and Tea Area to their schedule, and Culver does not think either of these teams should be overlooked.

"This is still a very tough schedule, and we have to be ready each and every week," Culver said. "The big keys to our success this year will be avoiding injuries and developing depth."

One of the players that will need to avoid the injury bug this year is senior tailback D'Andre Fore. Last year Fore was an All-State rusher that ran for 823 yards. What is more impressive about this stat is he gained this many yards while missing two games with an injury. Culver doesn't hide the fact that Fore will be an essential part to the Tanagers success.

"We will build our offense around D'Andre Fore," Culver said. "He has come into the season much stronger than last season, but still has his speed and quickness."

A comparison of the roster sheet between last year and this year tells the story of the gained strength by Fore. Listed at 145 pounds last year, Fore comes in adding 20 pounds to his frame and is listed at 165 pounds. This added strength and size should play a big role in Fore avoiding injury this year.

Another crucial player for the Tanagers is senior Will Mart. Mart was an All-Conference performer last year, but he has been moved away from his typical positions. Last year Mart was an offensive tackle and a defensive end. This year he will play tight end and linebacker.

"We decided to move Will Mart to tight end this year," Culver said. "He has very good hands and speed. He also has solid blocking skills from his time spent on the offensive line. This blocking will help while he is at tight end, because he can block inside and out on the perimeter."

The Tanagers bring in a brand new quarterback to run the team, Kyle Weiss. Although he is inexperienced Culver has confidence that Weiss will be successful this year.

"Kyle Weiss has no varsity experience at quarterback, but he throws the football effectively," Culver said.

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After Off-Season In Limbo, VHS Tennis Team Ready To Go

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article was originally published in our Aug. 20 edition. It has been modified to reflect competition since its publication.

BY JEREMY HOECK
jeremy.hoeck@yankton.net

VERMILLION — Following a successful fundraising effort to save the Vermillion High School tennis programs, the Tanagers are ready to return to the court.

With a new head coach, Betsy Hughes, the Tanagers boast a varsity roster that includes four seniors, including returning state consolation champion Valerie Robinson.

"We're expecting a lot of strong leadership, because those are all very positive and committed girls," said Hughes, a counselor at Vermillion Middle School. "They play hard and they want to improve, and we hope that will rub off."

Vermillion, which finished 14th at the

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TANAGERS: Claire Jones

VHS Cross

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ball. Gilkyson comes in off her second top-15 finish in three years, an eighth place showing a year ago.

"We feel she has a legitimate shot at a state title," Fischbach said. "She had a great track season last spring."

Jonna Lynch, who missed last season due to injury, returns as the lone senior on either Tanager team. Morgan Hower, a former state qualifier, is also back, as are sophomore Alyssa Soesbe and eighth graders Sophia Taggart and Cheyenne Mallory.

"We have some good young kids coming up," Fischbach said. "The veterans all have quiet personalities, but they have taken the younger kids under their wing and helped them out."

Also competing for the Tanagers are juniors Jade Fostvedt and Jackie Hulse, sophomore Caitlin Britten and freshman Britney Sweeney.

Fischbach is assisted by former Yankton High School and South Dakota State standout Amanda (Kuchta) Frohling, in her second year as a volunteer assistant.

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8/26	Tea Area	H	9/23	Wagner	A
9/2	Platte-Geddes-Dakota Christian	A	10/7	Parkston	H
9/9	Winner	H	10/14	Flandreau	H
9/16	Garretson	A	10/20	Elk Point-Jefferson	A

Bon Homme Lady Cavs Volleyball

8/27	Avon	H	9/27	Dakota Valley	H
8/30	Andes Central	H	9/29	Menno	H
9/3	Gregory Tourn.		10/4	Dakota Christian	H
9/6	Vermillion	A	10/6	Freeman	H
9/8	Platte-Geddes	H	10/11	Scotland	A
9/13	Tripp-Delmont-Armour	Tripp	10/13	Corsica-Stickney	H
9/15	Irene-Wakonda	Wakonda	10/18	Parkston	H
9/17	Cavalier Clash	H	10/21	Viborg-Hurley	Hurley
9/20	Wagner	A	10/22	SESD Tourn.	Wagner
9/22	South Central	A			