

Tanager Track & Field Team Set For Season

BY ALAN DALE
Vermillion Plain Talk

VERMILLION – A Tanager-tough track squad has a mixed bag of stellar talent returning and also has to replace some key point earners heading into the 2015 season.

Vermillion High School's boys' and girls' track teams enter a new campaign under seventh-year head coach Leni Billberg who does return stellar distance runner, freshman, Maddie Lavin and a cadre of top medley runners, while having to replace Class A state champion shot putter Nick Jensen.

"Losing Nick Jensen in the shot put will hurt the guys," Billberg said. "As a young girls team we did not graduate anyone last season."

But the boys do return four top runners who performed well in the 1,600 sprint-medley and everyone back, including Lavin, on the girls' side.

Lavin took third-place in both the 1,600 and 3,200-meter runs and she is backed by Ashley Schulz and Makenna Koble, with both having been a member during the last season of the 1,600-meter relay medley team that took third-place at state with a school record, 4:18.90.

Also back for the girls are Caitlin Siegel, Katie Kost, Anna Hackemer, Taylor Weber, Maddie Gregoire, and Kasey Jensen.

"We return all of the speed from our state relays of the 4-x-400 and girls' medley," Billberg said. "We just missed qualifying last year in the 4-x-100 and look even faster this year."

By the end of (Lavin's) career she will have rewritten our distance record books. She will break our 800 record and already owns the 3,200 and 1,600 records."



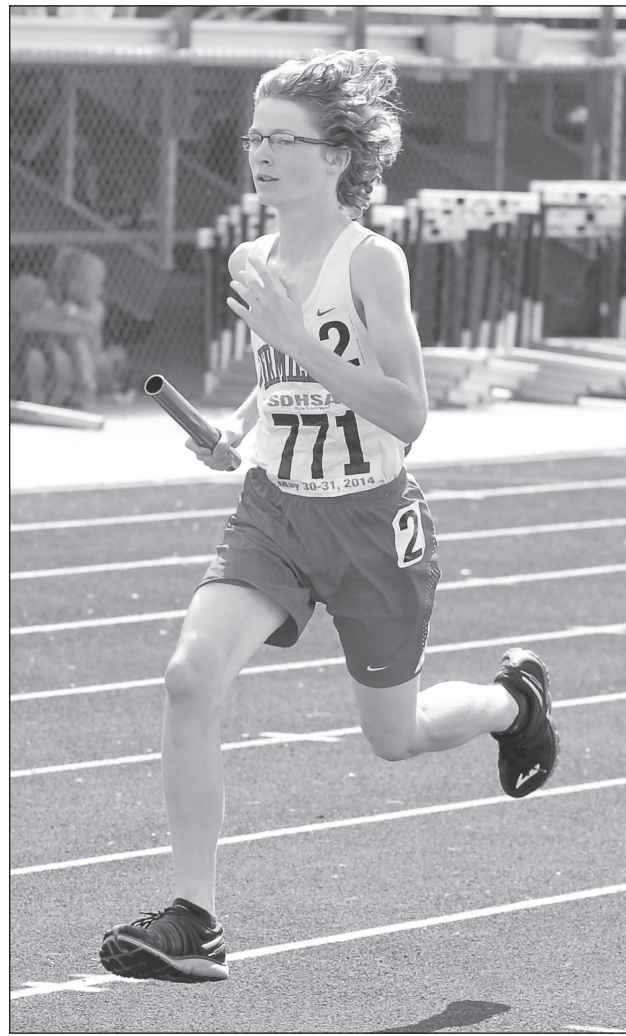
Vermillion's Maddie Lavin

Lavin is sparked by the memory of seeing her most recent cross country season cut down by an ankle injury that took a toll on her state title defense.

Now she is back, healthy and a whole lot hungrier. "I am excited and hopefully it can be better," Lavin said. "I am looking forward to a new season, putting in the

effort and hopefully getting back to where I was. I wanted (the repeat cross country title) really bad and then came the injuries and it accumulated to a whole lot more than what I thought happened and I was devastated. I was upset with myself. It's really mental for me because I really want it bad this season.

"I want to push myself



Vermillion's Parson Covington

further. I feel like I am getting stronger mentally-wise too as well as physically... the pressure is on as well because people are looking at you wondering 'is she going to come back. I want to show everybody that it wasn't a one-time thing."

Jeremiah Johnson, Logan Peterson, and Jon Rosales were three of the four state qualifiers on last year's medley relay and they are all back in the fold and should do well as the boys try to overcome the graduation of their shot

champ.

"Some runners watch Jeremiah (because) he gets better and better each year," Billberg said. "I look for some great 200's and 400's as well as very strong leadership from him. Logan has also shown signs of a breakout season. He ran some great anchor 800's in the medley last season. We can't wait to get him on the track."

Johnson is feeling pretty optimistic about the 2015 track season and says he and team has matured quite a bit

TRACK & FIELD	
3/23	Dan Lennon (Vermillion)
4/7	Husky Inv. (Elk Point) 3:30 p.m.
4/9	VHS Booster Club 2:30 p.m.
4/14	Canton Inv. 4 p.m.
4/16	Lennox Inv. 4 p.m.
4/21	Tea Area Inv. 3 p.m.
4/23	Lennox Inv. 4 p.m.
4/28	Dakota Valley Inv. 4 p.m.
5/1-2	Howard Wood Relays 3 pm/8 am
5/7	First Dakota (Yankton) 3 p.m.
5/14	Dakota XII (Madison) 2:30 p.m.
5/21	Region 4A (Tea) 2 p.m.
5/29-30	State (Spearfish/RC) 9 a.m.

from last year.

"Things are going pretty good and we do return everyone from our medley team," Johnson said. "We can only get better from last year. Last year we didn't have as many guys and we had a lot more freshmen come out so it's a lot more competitive in practice. Instead of four or five guys running with you we have 10, 15 guys now."

"We just have to work hard in practice and you have to push through and run your hardest at all times."

Numbers have also been good for the Tanagers, something that has been hit or miss at times.

"We have our largest squad in four years," Billberg said. "The final tally will be recorded this week as all of the winter season sports outside of swimming are complete. But, as of right now, we have 20 guys and 30 women. Those numbers will continue to change slightly throughout this month."

The Tanagers got their first look at the team at the Dan Lennon Invitational last week and now the season is set for a serious slate of action.

"Our big debut will actually be (Elk Point-Jefferson) on April 7 as that is really the first date we will have all of our athletes available to compete," Billberg said.

Vermillion Golfers Look To Build On Experience

BY ALAN DALE
Vermillion Plain Talk

VERMILLION – Last year they were young and just getting after it.

Now they are older with something to prove.

Without a senior on the team, the 2014 Vermillion High School girls' golf team finished tied for fifth-place at the Class A State Finals and yet they don't feel as if they did as well as they could have.

"We choked," junior Kayla Stammer said.

On that note, the Tanagers have entered a new campaign with renewed confidence, a lot more strength and a chip on their shoulder for long-time head coach Kirk Hogen.

The newest edition of these Tanagers opened its season on Tuesday in Madison.

"We have the opportunity to compete for some type of medal at the state tournament," Hogen said. "That's our goal any year. We hope to compete and we should be able to."

"There's more confidence as much as anything. We went into some bigger matches last year where we fared well. I am seeing a lot more physical strength and a little more distance."

Last year the team shot a 350 at state and also added a second-place finish at the regional tournament.

The Tanagers return top performers in juniors Kate Brockevelt and Kayla Stam-



Vermillion's Kyleigh Moran

mer and sophomore Kyleigh Moran, while senior Audrey Milner and junior Emily Schmitz are expected to make serious strides.

For this team, growth is

about figuring out the nuances of the mental game. "Luckily in golf just because you play badly one day doesn't mean you will the

GIRLS' GOLF	
3/31	at Madison 2 p.m.
4/2	Elk Point-Jefferson Inv. 9 a.m.
4/7	Dakota Valley Inv. 9 a.m.
4/13	vs. Lennox 4 p.m.
4/14	vs. West Central 2 p.m.
4/16	Madison Inv. 11 a.m.
4/20	West Central Inv. 9 a.m.
4/27	Vermillion Inv. TBA
4/30	S.F. Christian Inv. 9 a.m.
5/4	Dakota XII (Madison) 9 a.m.
5/11	Region 2A (Bakker Crossing) 9 a.m.
5/18-19	State A (Madison) TBA

next day," Stammer said. "So yeah, we were younger and playing with girls a lot better than you and would bring down your confidence so you might not step up that day. But, even for our state meet, you can go play well the first day and do terrible. Or you can go back and do even better than the first day. You can recover in the sport. That's not how you are going to do forever."

Brockevelt was the lone Tanager to make an all-state spot as she finished in 18th place, improving eight strokes from her first round to the second to secure the spot.

"She shot a 97 and came back with an 89, but (Stammer and Moran) came out there fairly decent the first day and ballooned up in the second but that will happen at a state tournament," Hogen said. "They are fairly tight as a group so they'll mix and match."

The familiar faces makes for a comfort in knowing how good the team was and that it

remains intact.

"Not losing any seniors from last year definitely helps because we all know where we stand and expect how we're each going to play," Moran said. "We all worked hard to improve from last year. Playing well together definitely is going to help."

So far Hogen's focus has been to get "the rust off" a little bit as the squad has gotten some practices and two qualifiers in.

He feels it's too early to tell where the team's short game is yet, but believes the team's putting must improve.

"It's just some basic mechanics and we have worked on that as a whole group," Hogen said. "They just need to get reminded of some basic setup and routines. Their setup isn't too bad as a whole, but it's more initial fundamentals of their stroke, and that's my job. You got to be able to putt."

The Tanager program on both the boys' and girls' sides have had long-term success thanks in large part to how they prepare.

"Our coach is a pro so that definitely helps where other teams have young coaches or coaches that coach a lot of other sports," Brockevelt said. "Also we have a really good golf course (The Bluffs) that is always

VHS GOLF | PAGE 6

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GIRLS' GOLF	
3/30	Brookings/at Br. Valley 2 p.m.
4/2	Washington/at Mitchell 1 p.m.
4/6	vs. O'Gorman noon
4/10	Parkston Inv. (Mitchell) 10 a.m.
4/14	vs. Mitchell/Lincoln 2 p.m.
4/17	Yankton Inv. 10 a.m.
4/24	Mitchell Inv. 10:30 a.m.
4/27	Sioux Falls Inv. 9 a.m.
4/30	Brookings Inv. 10 a.m.
5/8	ESD (Aberdeen) 10 a.m.
5/14	Brandon Valley Inv. noon
5/18-19	State AA (Rapid City) 9 a.m.

YHS Golf

FROM PAGE 4

coach, and being there for advice for the other girls."

With the weather impacting the readiness of the courses, the team has also been forced to either play rounds or work on short game.

"It would have been nice to hit balls instead of playing right away, but we've gotten some good in," Sime said. "It will be interesting to see how the first few competitions go."

Yankton played its first match against Brandon and Brookings March 30 in Brandon, and will play three meets at home this season, all close to mid-April.

"We're going to stay competitive and build on our potential," Sime said.

You can follow Emily Niebrugge on Twitter at twitter.com/ENiebrugge. Discuss this story at yankton.net.

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Turf

FROM PAGE 4

bright white lines and letters along the Missouri River at Riverside Park, Bob Tereshinski Stadium is more than just a pretty sight — which the people of Yankton haven't taken for granted.

"I've seen kids out taking pictures of it just because it looks so nice," Bernatow said. "It's just neat to have, but it's also provided a lot of opportunity."

The negatives previously faced come especially in the

form of South Dakota weather and field maintenance, something Bernatow said has made a difference already this season.

"There's less maintenance with the turf field, and it plays like a premium grass field every day," said Bernatow, Mount Marty's head baseball coach. "There's a lot of potential with this new field."

That potential comes in the form of earlier, better practices, and potentially recruitment.

"We've spent more time practicing outside versus inside this year, which is something we wouldn't be

able to do so early in the year without the turf," Bernatow said. "We've also been able to have home games in February knowing the field will be in great shape. That could interest some potential players."

The players able to take advantage of the field have also noticed the difference.

"This is the nicest field in South Dakota," Mount Marty Lancer baseball player Zac Hollenback said. "This is good for the baseball team, the softball team, and just baseball in general. We wouldn't be able to practice so early in January without this."

So far, Mount Marty has been able to host 17 games with seven colleges beginning in February through March.

"This was a fortunate leap of faith, and the city really stepped up to support Yankton baseball as well as the other programs here," Bernatow said. "Yankton has invested in its kids and baseball as a whole, and the facility is providing better opportunities."

You can follow Emily Niebrugge on Twitter at twitter.com/ENiebrugge. Discuss this story at yankton.net.

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Centerville Track & Field	
March 31	Lounsbury Early Bird (Centerville) 1 p.m.
April 9	Turner County Relays (Centerville) 1 p.m.
April 14	Rotary Relays (Centerville) 1 p.m.
April 16	Menno Relays 9:30 a.m.
April 21	Tri-State Inv. (Gayville) 3 p.m.
April 23	Flyer Inv. (Freeman) 1 p.m.
April 30	Erv Ptak Relays (Menno) 4:30 p.m.
May 1-2	Howard Wood Dakota Relays (Sioux Falls) TBD
May 5	Don Dieder Relays (Freeman) 1 p.m.
May 9	Parker Booster Club Inv. 10 a.m.
May 12	Tri-Valley Conf. (Gayville) 1 p.m.
May 21	Region 5B (Gayville) 10 a.m.
May 29-30	State Meet (Rapid City) TBD
Boys' & Girls' Golf	
April 2	Southeast S.D. Small-School (Fox Run, Yankton) 9 a.m.
April 7	Parker Inv. (ParMar GC) 9 a.m.
April 15	Gayville-Volin Inv. (Hillcrest, Yankton) 10 a.m.
April 21	Baltic Inv. (Renner) 9 a.m.
April 24	Irene-Wakonda Inv. (Glennridge GC) 10 a.m.
April 30	Alcester-Hudson Inv. 10 a.m.
May 4	Pre-Region 3B (Yankton) TBD
May 11	Region 3B (Yankton) TBD
May 18-19	State B Meet (Yankton) TBD