

# VHS Volleyball Mixes Youth, Experience

BY ALAN DALE  
The Plain Talk

VERMILLION — What once was a team that found itself a bit shorter than most is now on the better end of the measuring stick for the 2014 volleyball season.

The Vermillion Tanagers enter the new Class A campaign with a bit of tall timber in their ranks and a squad balanced with youth and experience that believes they have the right mojo to work together for strong results.

Coming off a 13-12 season and a 7-5 Dakota XII mark in 2013, the Tanagers, which won one game at the Region tournament last fall, believe everything is in order as their first match beckons.

Their first match will be in Vermillion on Tuesday at 6:15 p.m. against Lennox.

For this squad it's a mix of young and older with six seniors dotting the roster dominated by 10 underclassmen including six sophomores.

"The more the merrier," senior outside hitter Jessica Brady said about having the younger players on the team. "If you got talent we definitely want you to use it. The more positions people can play the better. We are a team and we should always be equal."

The team's harmony is based on a singular purpose to win and all the players older and younger know that no one segment of the roster can do it alone.

"We are all part of a team and everybody treats each other equally," sophomore Kasey Madsen, a middle blocker said. "We have to if we want to do well. If we mess up they are giving pointers and tips on how to do better next time."

"The older girls help me out a lot and are supportive. They tell me where to go out on the court. They aren't scary."

For Lenni Billberg, the Tanagers' head coach for a 14th season, the Vermillion girls are chock full of options offensively and that can't hurt.

"Chloe Peters and Rachel Finnegan are really two top notch outside hitters," Bill-



A taller team can only help Vermillion's volleyball hopes in 2014. (Alan Dale/Vermillion Plain Talk)

berg said. "Last year Chloe played the middle for us and finished second in the state in blocking so that will change our blocking scheme a lot to move her to the outside. We are looking for a young middle right now. Kasey has the lead right there. Our senior Caitlin Siegel is playing really well there for us too."

"Sydney Peters is a left handed which is always a great thing to have too because teams aren't used to that."

The setters will be young as junior Kayla Stammer and sophomore Kyleigh Moran will play together in a 6-2 to help with Billberg's blocking schemes.

"We are younger in setting," the coach said. "Our younger kids are learning and that might be our weakest

point right now, but we will get there."

The height that was lacking during recent seasons is a great boon for the defense and the ability to attack along the net and more points of focus.

It can also be a terror for other teams on the defensive side of the net.

"We definitely put up some harder blocks than we have been working pretty hard in our hitting," Brady said. "We will be pretty competitive this season."

The extra size can also change how a team defends.

"It makes us work to be outside the block instead of being behind the blockers," Billberg said. "It gives us a better chance to know where the ball is going to go."

That allows the team to defend dinks and tips and

tool shots rather than have to sit back and set up to dig bombs from terminating front row players.

That's something the Dakota XII can always present as one of the best volleyball conferences in the state.

Billberg cites Sioux Falls Christian — "one of the best programs over the last 20 years" — defending state champions Dakota Valley, Elk Point-Jefferson, Tri Valley and Madison as top notch squads the Tanagers will battle for postseason supremacy.

"Each night we are going to play there will be no easy match," Billberg said of the Dakota XII slate.

Last year Elk-Point Jefferson eliminated the third-seeded Tanagers from the post season.

Brady thinks this could be a whole different season.

"It changes every year and it will be different and we will be different," Brady said.

"Tea and Dakota Valley are teams we are challenged by, but it's different every year because a lot of the other teams could come up and be stronger."

No matter who is bigger, faster, better, or stronger, Brady knows what it takes to get Vermillion to have a memorable and potentially successful season.

"You can have all the skills but if you don't work well as a team you aren't going to get anywhere," she said. "Right now we have a good team structure and we have a really positive attitude and that will carry us to the next level."

VHS VOLLEYBALL		
9/2	vs. Lennox	7:30 p.m.
9/4	vs. S. Sioux City	7:30 p.m.
9/6	Luverne Inv.	9 a.m.
9/9	at Bon Homme	7:30 p.m.
9/11	vs. Tri-Valley	7:30 p.m.
9/16	at SB-Luton	7 p.m.
9/20	Cavalier Clash (Tyndall)	8:30 a.m.
9/23	vs. Tea Area	7:30 p.m.
9/29	at Wagner	7:30 p.m.
9/30	vs. S.F. Christian	7:30 p.m.
10/2	vs. West Central	7:30 p.m.
10/7	at Dell Rapids	7:30 p.m.
10/9	at Madison	7:30 p.m.
10/16	at Canton	7:30 p.m.
10/18	Dakota XII Conf. (Elk Point)	9 a.m.
10/21	at Beresford	7:30 p.m.
10/24	vs. Dakota Valley	7:30 p.m.
10/30	vs. Elk Point-Jeff.	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 4-11	Region 4A	
Nov. 20-22	Slate A at Watertown	

# Vermillion Boys' Soccer Program Preps For 'Interesting' Season

BY SCOTT BORMANN  
For The Plain Talk

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This originally appeared in the Aug. 22 edition of the Vermillion Plain Talk. It has been updated to reflect the ongoing season.

VERMILLION — This season is expected to be thrilling for the Tanager boys' soccer team.

also

■ The Freeman Academy boys' soccer preview capsule is on **PAGE 12A**

more interesting for a team used to contending.

Yet, with some of the teams they are used to playing receiving sanctioned status, the Tanagers will be venturing into uncharted territory.

"The league this year will be interesting," head coach Curt Nelson said. "We have a pretty small group of teams that remain from last year's competition, so we are actually going to see quite a few new teams this year, and teams that we haven't played in the past."

The unpredictability of the competition should add lots of excitement.

"I'm not quite sure what we are going to see," Nelson said, "but I'm sure it will be a mixture across the board of solid teams from bigger schools as well as some younger types from some smaller schools that have some co-ed programs."

The team is sweating bullets as they run through various drills and scrimmages to hone their skills and improve their teamwork.

VHS BOYS' SOCCER		
8/23	vs. Freeman Acad.	T 1-1
9/6	Custer/at Chamberlain	2 p.m.
9/11	vs. Mitchell Christian	6 p.m.
9/13	at James Valley Chr.	11 a.m.
9/25	at S.F. Christian	6 p.m.
6/27	vs. Custer/Chamberlain	4 p.m.

The setting sun overlooks Cotton Park as the coaches' eagle eye look for subtle improvements the team can make.

"We are pretty young, and we still have to establish where we are going to get our scoring," Nelson said. "Our defense is pretty seasoned, and they provide some good leadership for us, but we lost a lot of our attacking up front this year, so we are still looking for that."

The team is looking to rebuild skills lost since last season, but not all the athletes have an off season from soccer.

"I actually play soccer year-round up in Sioux Falls," senior striker Sam Tigert said. "I went to two competitions, plus regionals in Illinois. I was pretty busy with soccer all summer."

His focus on soccer gives him an obvious advantage at the start of the season.

"I won't be losing my skills," senior defender Jefferson Galvin said, "I'll be keeping it up and adding to it as the year goes on, so hopefully I will have enough to help this team out quite a bit."

Since soccer is the world's most popular sport, the team is able to look worldwide for role models.

"A lot of people would say Lionel Messi (is the best player in the world)," Galvin said, "but I would have to go with Zlatan Ibrahimovi\_ just



SCOTT BORMANN/FOR THE PLAIN TALK

Vermillion sophomore Seth Druin, right of center, and Freeman Academy's Brennan Waltner, 14, and William Janssen, 11, converge on the ball during their match on Aug. 23 in Vermillion.

because he's so much bigger than everyone else.

"He just pushes everyone else around, which is kind of what I do," Galvin said about how he models himself after the Swedish national team captain. "I'm not necessarily stronger, just more athletic than a lot of people."

The squad is set with a solid core of players ready to set the tone according to Nelson.

"We have three seniors this year, and they will anchor our defense, midfield

and attacking fronts," Nelson said of the team leaders. "Jeff is going to be our big defensive man in the middle. He brings a lot of humor and enthusiasm to practice, and he will provide some good speed in the back."

"Matt Wasley is a strong midfielder, that will provide some defensive midfield support for us this year," Nelson said. "Sam Tigert is our senior up front who will provide that attacking spark that we will be looking to have this year. We are really excited about those guys."

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