

Vermillion Softball Squad Ready To Go For 2014

BY ALAN DALE
The Plain Talk

VERMILLION — Last year high school softball in Vermillion survived with scant numbers. Taking a look at the team picture of the Tanagers' squad in 2014 the amount of players interested in the game is far from an issue. Around two dozen young ladies were ready to sport the Vermillion High School softball uniform when they opened their season Sunday in Watertown for two games. The first pitch of the season is set for 10:30 a.m. against the SW Sluggers and then the Tanagers are scheduled for a 1:30 p.m. contest

with the hosts. The junior varsity has two games against teams from Watertown scheduled. So now they are a part of a solid 14-team tournament setting as one of many squads on hand where last season they finished in sixth-place in Varsity B play. The girls couldn't be happier. "I feel like we have a very strong team this year and I am very excited," senior Audry Mueller said. "Before we had such a small program and to be able to finish my senior year with such a strong and amazing team with so many great players it's going to be a blast." Admittedly as recently as a few days ago not a whisper was peeped

about Vermillion even having a softball team. With a number of girls fired up to play it's now time to know they exist. "We have traveling teams coming up so we have a lot of younger girls coming up and only have two seniors," sophomore Kiley Wood said. "It's becoming a lot bigger of a sport and last year we weren't even this big so a lot of people probably didn't even know (they had a team this season)." The interest is also more dialed into playing softball according to Wood. "It says that there are a lot of

girls committed to the sport now instead of losing players to other sports like we were before," Wood said. "They are coming to play softball. It's just becoming a lot bigger in the school." Mueller is very optimistic that the squad has plenty of firepower to compete. "We have so much talent, there is no doubt about it," she said. "I am just proud of how many girls have come out and showed what they've got. It is just amazing." Last year's result was solid considering the lack of a big roster. "We were a lot better than we had been in previous years," Wood

said. "We just keep growing as a team and it helps to be with the same group of girls from last year this year. The team bonds so much better. "We have a lot of good pitchers, we have a good defense, and everyone is willing to get dirty. Everybody can hit the ball so we have a really strong team." Mueller concurs with Wood's assessment and knows what the Tanagers need to be successful. "We have to come together as a team and have a strong defense," she said. "We have to be tight as a team on defense and we have to have big bats."



Vermillion's Brandi Styles

Tanager Tennis Team Battles The Big Squads

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 — Vermillion High School's girls' tennis team is itching to get this season's competition to get underway.

They kicked off their season on Aug. 23 at the Yankton Quadrangular, where taking on larger schools will be a good for this squad.

"The smaller the school, the tougher it is to be and stay competitive," Head Coach Betsy Hughes said. "You can pretty much tell how a school will do based on their size."

She has a great cadre of athletes to go after all the

VHS TENNIS	
8/23	Yankton Quad
8/26	Mitchell Tri.
9/9	Madison/at Aberdeen Central
9/11	at Yankton
9/12	BV Inv.
9/15	vs. Madison
9/18	vs. Yankton
9/29	vs. Mitchell
10/2	Aberdeen Roncalli/Lincoln/at Washington
10/9-11	State at Rapid City

teams on their schedule this year. The Tanagers should be led by a pair of seniors and backed up by a couple of dynamic freshmen.

They have high expectations for their performances this season. "I want the younger girls that will be playing the

VHS TENNIS | PAGE 10A

VHS Golfers Gung-Ho For Upcoming Season

BY SCOTT BORMANN
For The Plain Talk

VERMILLION — The confidence of the Vermillion varsity boys' golf team was sky-high during its first practice of the 2014 season.

They are eager to start competition on Monday, and they are ready to take on all comers.

Their first test comes Monday at the West Central Invitational.

"The season should be fun," sophomore Cooper Williams said. "Another year of experience under our belts should give us a great advantage."

Vermillion head coach Kirk Hogen believes that his team's past of a number of competitive matches could only help them this year.

"The experience of some of the boys will help with our success in the big matches this season," Hogen said. "With all seven returning letter-winners fighting for the varsity spots, this gives Vermillion an advantage."

There will be plenty of tests for the team throughout the season.

"I am very confident about how our team will do this year," Hogen said. "I feel that we have the toughest region and toughest conference in the state."

The team resolve and expectations are clear throughout the team.

"We expect to send five (golfers) to Regionals," senior Andrew Heine said.

Heine was voted last year's most-improved player. "West Central should be a good eye-opener for us," jun-



Vermillion's Carter Andre

ior Paul Schwaginger said of the team's opener. "Going right out of the box with so many good teams will be a great test. We should compete really well."

Hogen is happy how his

golfers stay focused on their individual games, yet coach and support each other to improve.

"We can't worry about that last shot, or what other teams are doing," he said. "I

VHS GOLF	
8/18	West Central Inv.
8/21	Dakota Valley Inv.
8/28	S.F. Christian Inv.
9/9	vs. Lennox/Beresford
	2:30 p.m.
9/11	Vermillion Inv.
9/16	at Elk Point-Jeff.
9/19	Elk Point-Jeff. Inv.
9/22	Dakota XII Conf. (N. Sioux City)
	9 a.m.
9/29	Region 2A (TBA)
	9 a.m.
10/6-7	State A at Hot Springs

can't come up with a defensive game-plan, or worry about what strategies other teams have come up with."

The squad's laser-like focus is embodied by last year's Most Valuable Player, Williams.

"Cooper's mental toughness gives him the ability to succeed on the golf course as well as the point-guard for our basketball team," Hogen said. "It was fun to see his success in both roles as a freshman last year."

"Coming in as a freshman last year," said Williams, "I feel that I'm much better prepared this season."

Juniors Sam Craig and Cole Anderson echo this confidence for this season making the team's mental approach a unified one geared toward success.

Hogen loves to develop the young golfers into the leaders of the future and will have that opportunity with freshman Cody Mattes and eighth-grader Ryan Whisler, along with seventh-graders Brody Martinez, Sam Ward and Billy Radigan, and sixth-grader Hunter Lavin.

VHS Girls

From Page 8A

that we were playing well, playing strong, and connecting the passes. That goal was going to come and just needed the right opportunity and a little luck to make it happen."

It didn't hurt that the win came against Vermillion's rivals who also happened to be the defending state champion club team which knocked out the Tanagers (1-0) from last year's playoffs.

"This means that we have to keep pushing ourselves," junior Vermillion midfielder Autumn Barnett said. "This is a very good start for the season."

Tori Gregoire and Kinsey James also scored in the win.

Barnett said earlier in the week that she agreed with Freidel's overall assessment.

"We should be pretty good this year," she said. "We are making progress and we are going to be really good actually. We have played together for really long time and now that we are sanctioned we get to play teams we haven't played before and it will give us a better opportunity to have other people see us."

Fitzsimmons believes being able to play for the Class A state title in South Dakota adds to the team's endgame.

"It's great that we can play games and compete for that state tournament," Fitzsimmons said. "We now have an end goal there. Now that it is completely connected to the school it connects us to the community. Now school, coaches, and community can work together as a team."

There are some drawbacks to losing the team's club status.



Vermillion's Natasha Samudzi (on ground)

"We will miss the club team because there were some really good girls from Elk Point and Gayville-Volin and it will be hard to leave them and our old coaches," Freidel said. "But this also means that girls playing soccer in kindergarten won't have to worry about not having a team. The team does have to do more work than most others because essentially they have to raise all funds to survive."

"We have been playing since we were 4-5 years old because Vermillion has done a good job keeping up with soc-

cer and we were sad that we were going to lose the team after all those years so we were happy that we got sanctioned," senior striker Tori Gregoire said. "We had a couple of (fundraisers). The Main Street Pub gave 100 percent of their profits and team members' parents and grandparents helped us a lot."

"The fundraiser was great to see and all the proceeds from 3-10 p.m. went to the soccer program," Fitzsimmons said. "To know that people showed up and put in their time to make it happen the girls recognized that this is

something not to take for granted because it could have gone the other way." The fact they are able to play has given

the girls a sense of obligation. "This is the first year and we have to show them what we have and that we earned it," Barnett said.

"It's motivation to play harder and thank them for what they did for us and prove that we should be sanctioned," Gregoire added.

As for the product on the field?

"I am excited because the possibilities are endless," Fitzsimmons said. "We have a nice mixture of youth and girls that have been playing for a while. Having that mix will help us. I have girls that have been playing a long time and we will be able to build off of that."

The squad appears to be a powerful one athletically and that definitely won't hurt.

"We have a lot of strength and power," Fitzsimmons said. "We are great at using our head and working with the ball at our feet. We have every position covered and didn't see a position either on offense and defense that we didn't have someone who could play there. There isn't one area the other team can attack."

Strategically the Tanagers will be relentless in looking for an opening to exploit.

"I like to control the game and play for the counter," Fitzsimmons said. "We want to make the other team make

mistakes. We want to force the action and control the game. Control and counter and counter quickly."

Seven other teams besides Vermillion reside in Class A Belle Fourche, Garretson, Groton Area, Sioux Falls Christian, St. Thomas More, Tea Area, and West Central.

"The competition will be great," Fitzsimmons said. "We have a nice mix of smaller towns and then Sioux Falls Christian and St. Thomas More who are known for their sports. Even if we are the smaller class I don't think that will lessen our level of play."

"We will come to play and play to win."

West Central found that out the hard way.

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