

# Experienced Tanagers Boys' Basketball Team Ready For 2011-12 Season

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VERMILLION — The Vermillion Tanagers boys' basketball team ended their season with a 7-14 overall record last season, but there are plenty of reasons for optimism with the Tanager hoopers. The main reason for optimism is the experience that Vermillion will bring back to the court. The Class A Tanagers lost only one player from last year's team. This season's squad will have four players returning who started for the Tanagers last year. Part of the problem for Vermillion last year was that three of these players were only sophomores last season.

"A lot of guys received plenty of var-

sity minutes last year," Vermillion head coach Jay Drake said. "We still feel that we are a fairly young team, but hope to build on the experience our athletes received last year and improve as the season progresses."

The athletes who will be counted on for the Tanagers are led by junior guard Austin Krier. Last season Krier averaged 12 points-per-game and was selected as an All-Big 8 Conference performer. Tanner Anderson, another junior guard, was an honorable mention All-Big 8 performer last season after averaging seven points-per-outing. Senior forward Nile Morecraft and junior guard Tanner Settles are the other two returning starters from last season's team.

Drake, who is in his fourth season as

Vermillion's head boys' basketball coach, commented on what the Tanagers plan to accomplish this season.

"We need to be able to improve in many aspects to grow as a team from last year," Drake said. "We have to take it up another notch. We must continue to improve defensively as a team and also become a better rebounding team. If we can defend, rebound, and take care of the basketball on the offensive end and limit our mistakes we then feel we will have a chance to be in a lot of ballgames in the 4th quarter."

The other players expected to have an impact on the floor for the Tanagers are junior guard JT Sorenson, junior guard Anthony Leber, senior forward Caleb Miller, sophomore guard Jayce

Huska, sophomore center Nick Jensen, senior forward Mitch Ellison, junior guard David Day, and freshman guard Carter Andre.

Vermillion expects to play a man-to-man style defense and will try to pick up the pace offensively. Their strategies will be tested early on in the season, as they open their 2011-12 campaign with three straight Big 8 Conference games.

"We come out of the gates with three conference games in the first week and will have to be ready to go as we will have our hands full with each one of them," Drake said. "All three teams are very, solid programs and are very well coached."

The teams Vermillion will face in the opening week of the season are at Har-

risburg on Dec. 9, home against Lennox on Dec. 13, and at Madison on Dec. 15.

Drake looked forward to what the season may have in store for his young team.

"We have a good group of athletes that will work hard and compete. We hope to represent our school and community well and we hope to improve as the season goes on and hopefully we are playing our best basketball of the year when the district tournament rolls around in early March."

Assisting Drake in coaching duties for Vermillion are Jon Reuvers and John Olson.

## Gymnastics

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"Ready or not, she's that girl for us, and she knows the responsibility is on her shoulders."

From top to bottom, this year's roster features girls who have grown up around the sport and have watched previous competitive-level members perform against some of the best talent in the state.

Now, because of their experience in gymnastics and in other activities, they are ready for the big stage, Youmans said. "The key to success in this sport is year-round involvement," he said. "We've created opportunities, and a lot of the girls have taken advantage of those. There's plenty of nervousness about whether or not they're ready for the varsity level, but it's time to see where we stand with some of these girls."

Yankton will also looking to see if it can improve in the Eastern South Dakota Conference (ESD) after last season's sixth-place finish.

"Last year was that turning-the-corner year, where we did some things we haven't done in a long time," Youmans said. "Certainly my expectations are even higher this year, with this group we have and where we could be at in the ESD."

As will Yankton, the rest of the state will once again focus on toppling three-time defending state champion Watertown. The Arrows bring back their top five all-around athletes from last year's team, highlighted by all-around champion Jalyn Carrico (Fr.).

The development process in Watertown that has resulted in state titles is the kind of progression Yankton is trying to emulate, Youmans said.

"They are to the place where we want to be at in three years," he said. "They've got that group they have developed from third grade to seventh grade, and then carry that over into competitive level."

"And we're finally to that point now, where we've got some seasoned girls working their way up," he added. "We're not there yet, but that's what we're working toward."



GAZELLES | ELSIE KOTALK

## Lancers

From Page 2A

looked smooth in practice, as has Paige Nelson (1.7 ppg),"

The Lancers will also be looking for sophomore Allison DeKam, the team's tallest player at 6-1, to take on a bigger role. She has averaged 6.8 points and 7.4 rebounds.

"DeKam has a high up side," Schlingen said. "She can shoot the three and go inside to score. We could see more two-post offensive sets because we feel we have four kids that are all good scorers from inside."

Junior Sarah Crosgrove, who played in nine games a year ago, and sophomore Cassie Schuurmans (3.3 ppg, 1.7 rpg), who has been dealing with an early-season injury, could also earn time in the rotation.

The Lancer freshmen class of Tara DesLauriers (Clark), Kelli Norrid (Winner), Kelsey Schmidt (Mount Vernon), Holly Hegge (Crofton, Neb.) and Cheyenne Lambley (Burke), played for South Central could all make an impact in the future, but need to learn the college game, according to Schlingen.

"It's a big jump, and I think they're realizing that," he said. "We have a couple that look pretty good."

The Lancers were picked sixth in the always-challenging GPAC, a league that has produced the national champion in all but one year since it began play in 2000-01. Northwestern, the two-time defending national champion, ranked



LANCERS | KYLIE GROSS

first in the NAIA Division II pre-season poll, with Morningside second, Briar Cliff fifth, Concordia 22nd and Dordt and Mount Marty receiving votes.

As has been the case with the Lancers in recent seasons, they played a rugged non-conference schedule. Mount Marty defeated William Penn, Dakota State, Jamestown and Grace, but lost to Bethel (Ind.), Valley City State and College of Saint Mary.

Mount Marty began GPAC play with a loss to Concordia, but followed it by beating Dordt.

"Our kids know that every game is important, especially when you have high expectations like we have," Schlingen said. "We have eight games before a rugged conference schedule. We're looking forward to the pre-conference schedule, but we have to be ready to play."

Schlingen will be assisted by his son Todd James Schlimgen for a third season. Weston Swanson, who played for the MMC men's basketball team, will join the squad as a student assistant.

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