



Poppe Pulling Double Duty For Pirates

Longtime Coach At Helm Of Both Avon Basketball Teams This Winter

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK
james.cimburek@yankton.net

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the first part of a continuing series, following the Avon boys' and girls' basketball programs during the 2012-13 season.

AVON — It's about 5:30 p.m. and girls' basketball practice is just winding up. As the girls leave the court, a new set of athletes — the boys — start to take the court.

It's a scene you see at a lot of small schools. A lack of gym space means that two winter teams end up taking turns practicing right after school. The other team either practices before school or after the first team is done.

But in Avon, there isn't a lack of gym space. A nice auxiliary gym, big enough for a varsity practice, sits just a doorway away from the main gym. What Avon lacks this year is another head coach.

Brad Poppe, who had coached both Avon basketball programs for eight years prior to South Dakota moving girls' basketball to the winter in the 2002-03 school year, is coaching both programs this season. The girls open their season tonight (Friday) at Gregory, while the boys open at home on Saturday as part of a doubleheader with Wagner.

Trying To Step Away

After finishing a 13-7 season at the helm of the Avon boys last February, Poppe had decided to make the move back to coaching girls. Of the 452 coaching victories to his credit, 290 of them had come as a girls' coach, and the head girls' coach for the past three

seasons, Darla Van Gerpen, had stepped down. But as the school year drew to a close, Avon was still looking for a boys' coach.

"We had advertised the boys' job. We only had one teaching position to fill in the district, and we found a qualified candidate who was not a coach," Poppe said. "As the school year was winding down, I approached (athletic director Tom Culver) and asked if I could line some things up for the boys during the summer, to get things going for them."

As Poppe helped the boys with team camps, Avon again tried to find a coach. Again, the mailbox remained empty.

Making The Decision

As Poppe worked with the boys — and the girls' squad that he had already been hired to coach — the thought occurred to him that he could possibly take both teams.

"I had discussed it with my wife (Shelly, a sixth grade teacher in Avon)," he said. "I talked to Culver about it, and he was concerned about my well-being."

The concerns were justified. Poppe is 10 years removed from open-heart surgery, and the only other coach Culver knew had tried the coaching double — Miller's Darin Hunter — ended up with heart concerns.

"Brad reassured me that his check-ups have been fine," Culver said. "He and his wife are out walking all the time."

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ABOVE: Avon's Brad Poppe, center, watches his girls' basketball team during practice on Nov. 26. Poppe is in his 24th year of coaching, his 19th at the head of the Avon girls' program.

LEFT: Poppe addresses the Avon boys' team prior to their first practice of the season on Nov. 26. Poppe had planned to step away from coaching the boys after coaching the squad the past two seasons, but decided to take both the boys' and girls' teams when the Avon School District could not find a replacement boys' basketball coach.

JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

Vermillion High School Winter Sports

Tanagers Boys' Basketball

Date	Opponent/Event	Location	Time
12/7	Harrisburg	Vermillion	8:00 p.m.
12/11	Lennox	Lennox	7:45 p.m.
12/18	Tri-Valley	Tri-Valley	8:00 p.m.
12/28	Tea Area	Tea	8:00 p.m.
1/3	West Central	Hartford	7:45 p.m.
1/4	Parkston	Vermillion	8:00 p.m.
1/8	Bon Homme	Vermillion	7:45 p.m.
1/11	Lennox	Vermillion	7:45 p.m.
1/15	Elk Point-Jefferson	Elk Point	8:00 p.m.
1/17	Sioux Falls Christian	Vermillion	7:45 p.m.
1/19	Hanson Classic	Mitchell	TBD
1/22	West Central	Vermillion	7:45 p.m.
1/24	Dell Rapids	Dell Rapids	7:45 p.m.
1/29	Beresford	Beresford	8:00 p.m.
2/1	Madison	DSU Fieldhouse	7:45 p.m.
2/5	Dakota Valley	Vermillion	8:00 p.m.
2/8	Harrisburg	Harrisburg	8:00 p.m.
2/12	Wagner	Vermillion	8:00 p.m.
2/14	Madison	Vermillion	7:45 p.m.
2/22	Canton	Vermillion	7:45 p.m.
2/28, 3/2	District 8A Tournament	Higher Seed	6 or 7:45/7 p.m.
3/5	Region 4A Final	Tea	TBD
3/14-16	State A Tournament	Rapid City	TBD

Tanagers Wrestling

Date	Opponent/Event	Location	Time
11/27	Harrisburg/Lennox	Lennox	5:30 p.m.
12/1	SF Roosevelt Invitational	Roosevelt	9 a.m.
12/4	Madison/Tea Area	Vermillion	5:30 p.m.
12/8	Yankton Invitational	Yankton	11 a.m.
12/13	Tea Area/West Central	Vermillion	5:30 p.m.
12/21-22	SF Lincoln Invitational	Lincoln	1 p.m./10 a.m.
1/5	Brandon Valley	Brandon	10:30 a.m.
1/12	Harrisburg Invitational	Harrisburg	10 a.m.
1/17	Canton	Canton	6:30 p.m.
1/19	West Central Invitational	Hartford	10 a.m.
1/28	Beresford/Dakota Valley	Beresford	5:30 p.m.
1/31	Crofton	Home	6:30 p.m.
2/2	Big 8 Conference	Hartford	10 a.m.
2/5	Harrisburg/SF Washington	Washington	5:30 p.m.
2/8	Elk Point-Jefferson	Vermillion	6:30 p.m.
2/14-15	Region 2A Tournament	SF Lincoln	5 p.m./6 p.m.
2/22-23	State A Tournament	Watertown	10 a.m.

Tanagers Girls' Basketball

Date	Opponent/Event	Location	Time
12/7	Harrisburg	Vermillion	6:45 p.m.
12/11	Bon Homme	Vermillion	5:15 p.m.
12/17	Madison	Vermillion	7:15 p.m.
12/18	Tri-Valley	Tri-Valley HS	6:30 p.m.
12/28	Tea Area	Tea	2:00 p.m.
1/3	Sioux Falls Christian	Vermillion	7:45 p.m.
1/4	Parkston	Vermillion	6:30 p.m.
1/8	Madison	Madison (MS Gym)	7:45 p.m.
1/10	Lennox	Vermillion	7:30 p.m.
1/15	Elk Point-Jefferson	Elk Point	6:30 p.m.
1/18	Lennox	Lennox	6:00 p.m.
1/22	West Central	Vermillion	6:00 p.m.
1/24	Dell Rapids	Dell Rapids	4:00 p.m.
1/25	Canton	Vermillion	7:45 p.m.
1/29	Beresford	Beresford (DH)	6:30 p.m.
2/1	Sergeant Bluff-Luton, IA	Vermillion	7:30 p.m.
2/5	Dakota Valley	Vermillion	6:30 p.m.
2/7	West Central	Hartford	7:30 p.m.
2/8	Harrisburg	Harrisburg	6:45 p.m.
2/12	Wagner	Vermillion	6:30 p.m.
2/19, 21	District 8A Tournament	Higher Seed	6 or 7:45/7 p.m.
2/26	Region 4A Final	Tea	TBD
3/7-9	State A Tournament	Watertown	TBD

Tanagers Gymnastics

Date	Opponent/Event	Location	Time
11/27	SF Lincoln	Vermillion	6:30 p.m.
12/8	Wagner Invitational	Wagner	noon
12/14	SF Roosevelt/West Central	Roosevelt	6:30 p.m.
12/28	Winter Wonderland Invitational	Vermillion	11:30 a.m.
1/5	Stanley County Inv.	Fort Pierre	11 a.m.
1/8	Madison	Madison	6:30 p.m.
1/17	Yankton	Yankton	6:30 p.m.
1/28	Wagner/West Central	Wagner	6 p.m.
2/15-16	State A Tournament	Rapid City	11 a.m.