

# Tanager Boys Aim To End State Tourney Drought

BY ALAN DALE  
Vermillion Plain Talk

VERMILLION — It has taken Jay Drake methodical steps in his first six years as head coach of the Vermillion boys' basketball program.

Now he hopes this winter could end up being lucky number seven.

In order for that to happen, the Tanagers will have to overcome the loss of three big pieces from last year's 17-6 squad (8-3 in Dakota XII play) that fell in the regional final, 60-53 against Tea, leaving Vermillion High one game short of the Class A state tournament.

My, how far, the Tanagers have come.

From 19 wins in his first three years to 40 over the next trio of seasons, Drake has the program on solid footing coming off three .500 or better campaigns.

They get to launch a new season on Tuesday when they travel to perennially-tough Lennox for a 7:45 p.m. tipoff.

"What we are most proud of as a coaching staff is that we went from six wins that first year where we got drilled some games to the following year it was six wins again, but we were much more competitive," Drake said. "At one point of the season we lost eight-in-a-row and all by single digits. The year before we were getting run out of the game by the fourth quarter at times.

"Then it was seven wins, 10-10, 13 wins, and now last year. Our ultimate program goal is, that a school our size and our numbers, we need to be at the level where we compete (regularly)."

A program that hasn't been back to the state finals since 1989 when they wrapped a back-to-back title run, has made all the right moves

BOYS' B-BALL		
Dec. 16	at Lennox	7:45 p.m.
Dec. 22	vs. Chamberlain	7:45 p.m.
Dec. 29	Parkston Classic	TBA
Jan. 2	at Tea Area	6:30 p.m.
Jan. 3	at Valley	5:30 p.m.
Jan. 8	at West Central	7:45 p.m.
Jan. 9	vs. Parkston	8 p.m.
Jan. 13	vs. Bon Homme	7:45 p.m.
Jan. 16	vs. Lennox	7:45 p.m.
Jan. 17	vs. Luverne (Garretson)	noon
Jan. 20	at Elk Point-Jefferson	8 p.m.
Jan. 22	vs. S.F. Christian	7:45 p.m.
Jan. 27	vs. West Central	8 p.m.
Jan. 29	at Dell Rapids	8 p.m.
Feb. 3	at Beresford	8 p.m.
Feb. 7	Dakota XII Classic (Hartford)	
Feb. 10	vs. Dakota Valley	8 p.m.
Feb. 17	vs. Wagner	8 p.m.
Feb. 19	at Madison	7:45 p.m.
Feb. 27	vs. Canton	7:45 p.m.
Mar. 5	Region 4A (Top 2 Seeds)	
Mar. 7	Region 4A (High Seed)	
Mar. 10	Region 4A (Harrisburg)	7 p.m.
Mar. 19-21	State A Tour. (Rapid City)	

under Drake. Now his newest test will be to keep the ship heading in the right direction following the graduation of Tyrell Harper, Nick Jensen, and Jayce Huska.

"Tyrell moved in last year and obviously that helped our team out for one year," Drake said. "He was a big part of our 17-6 and we lose three big, senior starters. But we have a crew coming back that we are going to improve as the year goes on and if we can do that, we feel we will be competitive in our region at the end of the year."

It doesn't help trying to continue staying near the top when the upper crust of both the Dakota XII and Region 4 are chalk full of heavyweights. For four years running, the region has had its representative finish in the top three of the state tournament.

"You have to win your region, that's the bottom line," Drake said. "Last year our three tops seeds were Top 10 teams and Tea made it as a fourth seed. Our conference, our region, you will see some of the better basketball. With

that being said we have to find a way to get over the top. "We have been going in the right direction, but like anything you have to catch some breaks too."

Drake returns senior Carter Andre inside and sophomore point guard Cooper Williams to direct the offense and be the top of any defensive pressure the Tanagers employ.

"They are our two captains and obviously Cooper moving in and playing point guard as a freshman did a nice job," Drake said. "Both guys are going to have to step it up to another level. Carter's been four years in the program and understands what we want. They are both kids with great attitudes and we're just trying to get them to be more vocal leaders. Leading by example is good, now we just want them to be more vocal this year."

Andre has accepted the role as a new leader. "It's a different role for me," Andre said. "I have to go to the basket a lot more, go get more rebounds and lose balls. We don't have two 6-foot-6 guys around to help us anymore."

Williams embraces the role of the point guard, arguably the most valued spot on a basketball team.

"Going into the situation from the start I had to grow up last year being thrown into it," Williams said. "I feel a lot better this year and I am more ready to grow up a little bit more and grow as a basketball player."

Williams is also a stellar golfer and that heavy attention on the individual hasn't hurt the sophomore's ability to grow mentally tougher in his early high school years.

"I guess golf's helps in individual aspects knowing that you have that pressure on

yourself and have to individually perform when you need to," Williams said. "It helps in just getting you to do your job and individually contributing to the team."

Drake said that offensively the team will run a motion offense with plenty of 4-out, 1-in looks and at times will go to a 5-out variety. With the 35-second shot clock officially a part of Class A basketball, it will only push teams to improve their ability to find open shots quicker and develop players who can create their own offense with the clock winding down.

"We will be slim in the post, so we will have to try and push the tempo a little more and see if we can't do stuff in transition," Drake said. "We do feel we have guys who can handle the basketball and make good decisions. Last year we made 200 more free throws than the other team's shot, so we have to keep putting pressure on the defense."

"The (shot clock) is a huge addition to Class A basketball. I like it. It will be tough to get used to and take time to adjust. It makes the game more exciting for the fans to watch."

Andre likes the new addition to the Class A game. "I like it actually," he said. "It changes the game and the perspective, like the last few minutes of a game. Defensively it's probably a little less work, you only have to defend 35 seconds while some teams can hold it for a minute, minute-and-a-half. Offensively you have to focus even more."

Defensively, the Tanagers will stay mostly in a man-to-man philosophy. Full court pressure could also help whittle the shot clock down and force offenses to have even lesser time to run their actions.

With the Lennox game approaching the Tanagers aim to stick to the bread and butter



PAUL SCHWASINGER

that they feel will guarantee them a chance to compete every night.

"If we defend, rebound, and play hard, we know we can give ourselves a shot," Drake said. "Offensively we may not be the most skilled or athletic team, especially in this area of the state, but if we can guarantee we play harder than the other team every night...we also have to take care of the basketball."

If that happens the team's preparation and the level of competition Vermillion High will face could only make things even better if not more challenging.

"With our region, our conference, and the schedule we play it will prepare us for March for our region tournament," Drake said. "You just need to get through the grind and hopefully, with a young team, build confidence too. You take some lumps and it can hurt you too."

"We have to stay healthy. We like the group we have, but Nick and Tyrell did a lot of rebounding for us last year so we will have to figure out how to rebound as a team. We expect to improve as the year goes on and if we do we feel we can remain in the region discussion this year."

## Miracle Boys Make Return To Varsity Hockey

BY ADRIENNE KUSEK  
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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This article originally appeared in the Dec. 5, 2014, edition of the Press & Dakotan. It has been edited to reflect the ongoing season.

After a year away from varsity competition, the Yankton boys' hockey team will return with a program in 2014-15.

Prior to 2012, Yankton had only competed at junior varsity and lower levels. The squad played one season at the varsity level before dropping down to a JV schedule last season.

A strong JV season, capped by a sixth place finish at state, has expectations for this season at a high level.

"Our number one goal will be to qualify for the Varsity State Tournament," head coach Chad Kapla said. "Once we qualify we will see how far we can get in the tournament."

There is a difference in how hockey is played between the varsity and JV levels.

"The Varsity level will be much faster and more physical," Kapla said.

Eleven seniors and a strong junior class will fill the roster for Yankton.

"We had a solid JV season last year, winning 14 games and ranking in the top two most of the season," Kapla said.

Their experience is one of Yankton's biggest strengths, "This group of kids has played a lot of hockey and been through a lot of touch battles," Kapla said.

On offense Yankton has Austin Barger, Mitch Vavra, Jacob Hubbs, Colby Benson,



AUSTIN BARGER

and Charlie Stephenson taking control.

"These boys are proven players who can put the puck in the net," Kapla said. Barger scored 30 goals last season."

Defensively, Yankton has Jacob Doyle and Patrick Weinandt as leaders. Tyler Wendande and Christian Slate are two experienced goalies for Yankton.

"Tyler Wenande will set the tone for our season, he should be one of the top goalies in the state," Kapla said. "If he plays well we should be in most of our games."

Mostly upperclassmen fill the roster at the moment.

"I anticipate some freshmen and sophomores to compete for playing time at the Varsity level as well," Kapla said.

Little improvements over

the course of the season will be the plan for success for Yankton,

"We are looking to get better every practice and every game, which will hopefully translate into us playing our best hockey at the end of the year," Kapla said. "We will need to improve our overall team speed and learn to make quick decisions with the puck."

The Yankton Varsity hockey team has a lot of heart and has fun in what they do.

"These kids always have fun playing this great game, now they need to dig deep and take it to another level," Kapla said. "They really love the game and are always having fun in both the practices and games."

Yankton opened the 2014-15 season at Oahe (Pierre) on

MIRACLE BOYS' HOCKEY		
Dec. 6	at Oahe	L 1-10
Dec. 7	at Oahe	L 4-7
Dec. 13	vs. Rushmore	5 p.m.
Dec. 14	vs. Rushmore	10 a.m.
Dec. 20	vs. Huron	5 p.m.
Dec. 27	at Watertown	8 p.m.
Jan. 2	vs. Mitchell	7 p.m.
Jan. 3	at Sioux Falls II	7 p.m.
Jan. 11	at Huron	3 p.m.
Jan. 18	vs. Brookings	1:30 p.m.
Jan. 23	at Mitchell	8 p.m.
Jan. 30	vs. Watertown	8 p.m.
Feb. 7	vs. Aberdeen	7 p.m.
Feb. 8	vs. Aberdeen	10 a.m.
Feb. 13	at Sioux Falls I	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 14	at Sioux Falls II	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 21	at Brookings	3:30 p.m.
Feb. 27	vs. Sioux Falls I	7 p.m.
Mar. 13-15	State Varsity Tour. (Brookings)	

Saturday and Sunday.

You can follow Adrienne Kusek on twitter at [www.twitter.com/AdrienneKusek](http://www.twitter.com/AdrienneKusek). Discuss this story at [www.yankton.net](http://www.yankton.net).

## Yankton Looks To Continue Progress In Second Season

BY ADRIENNE KUSEK  
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Having one season under its belt, the Yankton bowling team has some experience to have a successful season.

"Our coaching goals are to help our athletes understand what the sport of bowling is about, with equal parts learning, enjoyment and performance," Coach Patrick King said.

Last year was the first season Yankton has had a bowling team. They had a team of 10 boys and one girl. The boys' team finished fourth at the state tournament.

"Most of the students were sophomores and juniors, and nearly all had local junior league bowling experience," King said.

"The YHS boys team is talented and experienced, led by seniors Malan Moody, Chandler Losing, and Tyler Novak, and juniors Henry Borgstrom and Dylan Mace," King said. Two middle schoolers have joined the squad: Jacob McBride and Aaron Blackwell.

The girls' team has tripled in size. Junior Dakota Mace leads the girls' team and is

### YANKTON BOWLING

Nov. 24	.....at O'Gorman
Dec. 5	.....vs. Brandon
Dec. 12	.....vs. Dell Rapids
Jan. 9	.....vs. S.F. Roosevelt
Jan. 16	.....at S.F. Lincoln
Jan. 23	.....vs. Vermillion
Jan. 30	.....vs. Brookings
Feb. 6	.....at West Central
Feb. 13	.....at S.F. Washington
Feb. 20	.....vs. Harrisburg
Feb. 27	.....State Tour. (Sport Bowl, S.F.)

joined by sophomore Carly Turner and seventh grader Bailey Wieseler.

Most of the athletes have experience on the local junior bowling league.

Yankton Bowling has a motto for this season: work hard, make great shots, and never give up. They practice twice weekly. During practice coaches help athletes improve their game. "We are looking to improve bowling fundamentals, targeting, oil pattern adjustments, the mental game, and teamwork," King said.

The Yankton bowling team hosts Dell Rapids on Dec. 12.

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## Miracle

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Johnson, Taylor Weber, Katelyn Lyman, Anna Lyman, Abby Weber, Isabelle Plath, Veronica Turner, Samantha Straatmeyer, Baylee Prather, Katelyn Stewart, and Victoria Weiland. The girls on this year's

team skated together last year as well.

"We are still a fairly young team with only a few upper class women," McClennen said.

Successful teams are always looking to improve their skills and the Yankton Miracle is no exception.

"This season we are really looking to improve on team work," McClennen said. "A few other things would be work

ethic, intensity and hockey sense."

Yankton is 2-1 on the season, with a pair of victories over Watertown.

"The team as a whole is very determined to be successful."

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