



P&D FILE PHOTO
Vermillion's Tyrell Harper soars in for a layup during a game against Mount Vernon-Plankinton at the Parkston Classic on Dec. 30. Harper, who moved to Vermillion from Florida to be with an ailing brother, has become a standout for the Tanagers, averaging nearly a double-double a game.

Harper Finding Home In Tanager Lineup

BY JEREMY HOECK
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VERMILLION — A family emergency brought Tyrell Harper to Vermillion High School.

And if there is such a thing as a blessing in disguise, the Tanager boys' basketball program is glad the 6-foot-6 athletic wing player made the move.

Harper, a native of Florida, arrived in Vermillion last summer to help take care of his older brother Deandre Thomas, who had been suffering heart problems. Harper's middle brother is 15 years old, which left Harper with a "hard decision."

"When my brother got sick, I knew I had to come up here," Harper said after a home game last week.

Suddenly, Harper went from Seminole High School in Sanford, Fla., with an enrollment over 3,000 students to Vermillion High School with just under 1,300 students in the entire school district.

Talk about a culture change.

"Coming up here, I knew it would be tough, but I didn't know it would be this tough," Harper said.

So far, though, he is adjusting quite well. Through 11 games, Harper is averaging 11.9 points, 9.4 rebounds, 2.7 assists and 2.2 steals for the Tanagers.

Though Harper maintains the style Vermillion uses isn't too different from his previous school, there is naturally an athleticism disparity.

"I haven't been to Florida, but I would bet Florida high school basketball is a lot different than South Dakota," Vermillion head coach Jay Drake joked.

"I think he saw that early on, trying to adjust the way the game's going to be called. He's just steadily improved each game."

Although the Tanagers were winning right out of the gate this season, it took a while for Harper to find his rhythm.

"My first game, it was crazy, I was playing to the crowd and not my game," Harper said.

"My teammates are a big reason why I'm having success," he added. "I just do what I have to do to help the team."

The Tanagers would have likely been a contender without the athletic Harper. But with him, they're a legitimate state tournament threat — they would need to first get through a competitive Region 4A.

At 11-1 entering tonight's (Tuesday) game at West Central, Vermillion leads Canton (7-2) in the region, and has suffered only a 2-point loss to Lennox.

As the season has progressed, so too has Harper, according to Drake.

"He changes our team, because he makes plays that you can't coach," Drake said.

The battle there, though, is finding a balance between making those 'wow' plays and working within the team system, Drake added.

"He's an emotional player, and yet, with some kids it's hard to reel them back in at times, but with him, he really refocuses and listens to coaching," the coach said.

In only half a season with Vermillion, Harper is already getting interest from college programs. Though he has yet to make a final decision, Harper does plan to stay in the area — to stay close to family.

"I wish I would have come earlier, knowing how I'd fit into this program, but I'm satisfied with it," he said. "That means I have one year

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Vermillion's Jensen Commits To USD

BY JEREMY HOECK
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VERMILLION — The University of South Dakota football program did not have to look far for its latest verbal commitment.

Nick Jensen, a 6-foot-6, 275-pound offensive lineman at Vermillion High School, told the Press & Dakotan on Monday night that he committed to USD earlier in the day.

Jensen, who is also a stand-out on the Vermillion basketball team, recorded 112 tackles and four sacks in his football career for the Tanagers.

"I liked the idea of staying in Vermillion," he said. "...they are taking the football program in a good direction."

Jensen said he received a partial scholarship offer from USD.

Commitments are not binding until athletes officially sign on National Signing Day on Feb. 5.

Hot Springs QB Commits To USD

HOT SPRINGS — Justin Harkless, a 6-foot quarterback from Hot Springs, verbally committed to the University of South Dakota, according to Hot Springs head coach Ben Kramer. Kramer said Harkless, who

led the Bison to the Class 11A semifinals last fall, was recruited as a walk-on. Harkless earned honorable mention All-State honors as a senior.

You can follow Jeremy Hoeck on Twitter at twitter.com/jhoeck. Discuss this story at www.yankton.net.

Little Mat Marvels



SHAUNA MARLETTE/P&D
ABOVE: Britney Eueb of Bon Homme tops Emma Baluis of Bon Homme in the girls' division of the Yankton Youth Wrestling Tournament, held Sunday at the Summit Center. More photos from the tournament are available on spotted.yankton.net. Results will be published when they are received.

LOWER LEFT: Josh Ruber of Yankton battles Tyson Hage of Vermillion.

LOWER RIGHT: Skylor Knakmuhs gets flipped by Brody Waul in the first round of the school boy division.



Nebraska G&P Seeks Info On Shot Bald Eagle Near Verdigre

LINCOLN, Neb. — The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission is seeking information on a bald eagle that was illegally shot recently near Verdigre in northeast Nebraska.

The adult eagle was found dead approximately 1 1/2 miles southwest of Verdigre. It was reported on Tuesday, Jan. 21, and on the following day it was confirmed to have been shot. The eagle's body had not shown decomposition and there was fresh blood on the beak.

Eagles are protected by the federal Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA), which prohibits the take, possession, sale, purchase, barter, offer to sell, purchase or barter, transport, export or import, of any bald or golden eagle, alive or dead, including any part, nest, or egg, unless allowed by permit. Maximum penalties for violating BGEPA can reach \$250,000 and imprisonment for up to two years.

To report information about the shooting, call Conservation Officer Jeff Jones at 402-762-5022 or Nebraska Wildlife Crime Stoppers at 1-800-742-7627. Callers may remain anonymous and could be eligible for a reward.

Freeman, Allen Girls Score Home Wins

FREEMAN — Erika Sage scored 16 points and Cailey Roth notched a double-double as Freeman downed McCook Central-Montrose 55-47 in girls' basketball action on Monday.

Nicole Saarie netted 13 points for Freeman. Roth finished with 10 points and a game-high 15 rebounds.

Rachael Laetsch led MCM with 16 points. Morgan Koepsell had 13 points for the Fighting Cougars.

Freeman, 11-3, is off until a Feb. 3 game at home against Marty Indian School. MCM, 6-4, opens the Big East Conference Tournament on Thursday.

MCCOOK CENTRAL-MONTROSE (6-4) 14 25 35 47
FREEMAN (11-3) 9 35 43 55

Corsica-Stickney 58, Viborg-Hurley 51

VIBORG — Hope Menning scored a game-high 21 points to lead Corsica-Stickney past Viborg-Hurley in girls' basketball action on Monday.

Brianna Kuyper had 12

points and five steals, and Jackie Dethlefsen had 10 points, nine rebounds and five assists in the victory.

For Viborg-Hurley, Abby Hora led the way with 20 points. Duana Lee netted 11 points. Angie Lee had 10 points and four assists. Valerie Sunderland grabbed nine rebounds for the Cougars.

Corsica-Stickney, 8-6, travels to Dakota Christian on Friday. Viborg-Hurley, 9-3, travels to Centerville on Thursday.

CORSICA-STICKNEY (8-6) 10 32 40 58
VIBORG-HURLEY (9-3) 16 26 37 51

Allen 56, Walthill 26

ALLEN, Neb. — The Allen Eagles jumped out to a 36-10 halftime lead and coasted to a 56-26 victory over Walthill in Lewis & Clark Conference girls' basketball action on Monday.

Gabby Sullivan had 17 points and four steals to lead Allen. Lexi Oswald posted 11 points and five steals. Lindsey Jones scored 12 points and Lindsey Sullivan had 10

points in the victory.

Jalisse Randol and Alondra Flores each scored eight points for Walthill.

Allen travels to Emerson-Hubbard on Thursday. Walthill hosts Wynot today (Tuesday).

WALTHILL (4-8) 4 10 16 26
ALLEN (7-9) 17 36 52 56

Lennox 45, Madison 41

LENNOX — Lennox overcame a near double-double by Madison's Morgan Skluzacek in a 45-41 victory over the Bulldogs in Dakota XII Conference girls' basketball action on Monday.

Katelyn Hinker led Lennox with 14 points. Taylor Anderson had nine rebounds and McKenzie Weeldreyer had three assists in the victory.

Skluzacek finished with 16 points and eight rebounds.

Lennox, 5-6, travels to Beresford on Friday. Madison, 2-8, travels to Tea on Thursday.

MADISON (2-8) 9 20 28 41
LENNOX (5-6) 10 25 34 45

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LANCER BASKETBALL

Tomorrow Night! MMC vs. Northwestern on Wednesday, January 29th

WOMEN'S TIP-OFF: 6 PM | MEN'S TIP-OFF: 8 PM | CIMPL ARENA

MOUNT MARTY LANCERS

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