Basketball | South Dakota State Girls' Class A Tournament

Vermillion Returns To Site Of '07 Title Run

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

VERMILLION — The last time the Vermillion girls' basketball team went to Spearfish, it proved to be a magical moment, the school's first and only state girls' basketball title.

A new coach, a new team, but the Tanagers are hoping to capture that magic again.

Vermillion begins its first South Dakota State Class A Girls' Basketball Tournament since that 2007 title run today (Thursday) in Spearfish against Miller, a 7 p.m. Central Time start. The tournament is being played at the Young Center on the Black Hills State University campus.

The Tanager program had fallen off after 2007, the third of three straight tourney appearances and five trips to state in eight years. With a new coach — Nick Mayer — and some hard work, Vermillion is back at state.

"A lot of things had to happen. The most important thing was that the kids saw that they had the potential to get there," said Mayer, who was an assistant on the 2007 title team. "It was really important that our kids believed that they could do it."

A tough district loss to eventual state runner-up Beresford a year ago helped light the fire for this season's drive.

"Last year we were really embarrassed in that district final," Mayer said. "Our kids said that they were not letting that happen

Senior forward Kelly Amundson has been a key component in the Tanagers' success, averaging 14.5 points and 7.4 rebounds per game. She also ranks among the team leaders at 1.8 assists per

Senior guards Lexi Regnerus (9.4 ppg, 3.8 rpg, 1.2 apg), Val Robinson (9.2 ppg, 2.4 rpg, 1.4 spg, 1.9 apg) and Beth Szymonski (8.3 ppg, 6.4 rpg, 1.7 spg, 1.6 apg) provide a strong perimeter balance for a team shooting 36 percent from 3-point range. Regnarus leads the team with 38 threepointers, with Robinson sporting 23 on the season.

"We like to pound the ball inside when we can, but our guards can take it to the rim or shoot the three," Mayer said. "That makes us tough to scout. If you take one away, another one steps up. We have kids that can come in off the bench and contribute as well."

Senior Bailey Carlson (2.0 ppg), junior speedster Blair Gilkyson (2.5 ppg, 1.3 rpg, 2.0 apg), fellow junior Mackenzie Huber (1.4 ppg, 1.5 rpg) and sophomore Josie Huber (4.5 ppg, 2.7 rpg, 1.4 spg) have all been solid contributors to the Tanagers' effort. Juniors Courtney Johnson, Mariah Larson, Brooke Schwasinger and Allison Heine have also seen action for Vermillion.

Part of what has sparked the Tanagers' success this season is not only the talent level, but the willingness to defer to teammates.

"You watch our kids play together is amazing," Mayer said. "You can preach it all you want in practice, but the kids have to buy into it. They are willing to give up potential points of their own so that a teammate can get a better

The Tanagers have also proven to be a solid club defensively, allowing 41.4 points per

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Vermillion senior Kelly Amundson, 31, attacks the basket during the District 8A Girls' Basketball Tournament earlier this season. Amundson and the Tanagers make their first trip to the State A Girls' Basketball Tournament since winning in 2007 as the tourney begins today (Thursday) in Spearfish.

Briar Cliff, Northwestern Win Openers

SIOUX CITY, Iowa — Kendra DeJong posted a double-double, one of four Northwestern players in double figures as the Raiders beat Indiana Southeast 76-56 in the opening round of the NAIA Division II Women's Basketball Tournament Wednesday at the Tyson Event Center.

DeJong finished with 18 points, 15 rebounds and four assists for Northwestern (24-7), which will play Jamestown (N.D.) in the second round on Friday.

Kami Kuhlmann and Mallory unard each had 11 point Mackenzie Small added 10 points in the win.

Ashmere Woods scored a game-high 24 points, and Megan Murphy had 14 points and 10 rebounds for Indiana Southeast (26-

BRIAR CLIFF 79, ST. THOMAS, FLA. 50: Christa Stewart scored 19 points on 8-10 shooting to lead Briar Cliff to a 79-50 rout of St. Thomas (Fla.) in the opening round of the NAIA Division II Women's Basketball Tournament on

Sara Reeves and Megan Salcedo each had 12 points for BC (23-9), which faces Davenport, Mich., in the second round on Friday. Ashley Zobel scored 11 points, and Avon native Kela Cihak added eight rebounds in the win.

Nickerline Montina led St. Thomas (24-8) with 15 points. Dannisha Pierce added 12 points and

Northwestern, Dordt Men Cruise

POINT LOOKOUT, Mo. — Northwestern used five players in double figures to cruise to a 95-69 rout of Tennessee Wesleyan in the opening round of the NĂIA Division II Men's Basketball Tournament on Wednesday in Point Lookout, Mo.

Zack Leeper scored 18 points, and Ryan Stock and Daniel Van Kalsbeek each had 16 points off the bench for Northwestern (25-6), which faces Northwest (Wash.) in the second round on Friday. Walker Seim netted 14 points and Ben Miller added 12

Shannon Smith led TWC (24-9) with 20 points. E'Jay Ward had 13 points and Quincy Scates added 10 points in the effort.

DORDT 63, CAL MARITIME 54: Trevor Wolterstorff posted 19 points and 10 rebounds to lead Dordt to a 63-54 victory over Cal Maritime in the opening round of the NAIA Division II Men's Basketball Tournament on Wednesday.
Dordt survived offensive control issues,

shooting 51 percent to counter its 21 turnovers. Cliff Warner had 15 points and Jordan Vogel scored 12 points on 6-6 shooting for Dordt (Ž9-4), which faces Warner Pacific in the second

round on Friday. For Cal Maritime (21-10), Josh Greenwell led the way with 16 points. Ty Houghton added 13

Parkston Set To Make Some Noise Out West

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

PARKSTON — If it is possible to "stay below the radar" with 20 victories on the season, the Parkston girls' basketball team is there. But the sixth-seeded Lady Trojans could be in position to put more than a blip on the

state's radar screen. Parkston's (20-3) 13-game win streak has followed the back-toback losses to Wagner and Elkton-Lake Benton in the middle of January. The run ties secondseeded Miller for the longest run going into state.

"After we got beat in January we stayed below the radar but we continued to get better," said Parkston head coach Rob Van Laecken, the state's all-time winningest girls' basketball coach with a 568-199 record. "After we got beat by Wagner (65-55 on Jan. 12) we felt that we could play with them."

That sentiment was proven on Feb. 27, when Parkston's Logan Wagner hit a 3-pointer in the closing seconds to oust the previously unbeaten Red Raiders.

"We were down 12 at the end of the third quarter, and our kids could have given up," Van Laecken said. "We played with a lot of heart and passion. It was a

Senior guard Marie Malloy is the Lady Trojans' leader with 22.6 points, nine rebounds, five assists and four steals a game, but she is far from Parkston's lone weapon. "She's our leading scorer, but

we've got what I call our 'Big 3.' Erica Herrold (13.9 ppg, 7 rpg, 3 apg) is our inside girl, but she can step our outside. Her play makes a big difference for us," Van Laecken said. "Logan (13.9 ppg, 5.4 rpg, 3.4 apg, 2 spg) is one of the better shooters in the state. She can go 0-5, then turn around and go 5-5. She's very capable of

scoring points, also."
Forwards McKenzie Wiedenbach (4 ppg, 2 rpg) and Jordan Bormann (2.2 ppg, 3 rpg) round out Parkston's first five. Krista Radke (4 ppg, 3 rpg), Alexis Horstman (1 ppg, 2 rpg), Taylor Bormann (3 ppg, 2 apg) and Laura Weiss (1 ppg, 1 rpg) have also been major contributors for the Lady Trojans. Sadie Schoenfelder,

Hallie Heisinger, Samantha Herrold, Justene Alley and Jessica Alley have also seen occasional time in the Parkston lineup.

"Our other kids have all accepted their roles well," Van Laecken said. "They play to their fullest. On any given night, we have a lot of kids capable of putting up points."
The Lady Trojans are also ca-

pable of keeping other teams from scoring points. Parkston held opponents to 46 points a game, but have played even better defensively.

"Early in the year we were giving up a few more points. After the Hanson Classic, our defense had to tighten the screws. We've been giving up 39 points a game since then.

While the Lady Trojans sport the sixth seed, the field is closer than most tournaments.

"Three teams were tied for the number one seed, the next three teams were tied for fourth," Van Laecken noted. "There is one loss between the first six teams.' Parkston draws defending

state champion Sisseton (21-2), the third seed, in today's (Thursday) late game, an 8:45 p.m. Central start. "I think we match up pretty

well," Van Laecken said. "You" might see a rarity, two teams playing man-to-man full court defense the whole game." Sisseton has been the premier

Class A program for the past decade, winning five titles in the last 11 years, including last year's title and a runner-up finish in "They're a pretty good program. They do a lot of good

things," Van Laecken said of the Lady Redmen. "We will have to play as well as we can." While the Lady Trojans have not been to state since 2005, they are not satisfied with just making

the trip to Spearfish. "We're going in with the attitude that we're not just happy to be there. We want to make some noise," Van Laecken said. "We have a job to do, and we're going to go in and do the best that we

The tournament runs through Saturday at the Young Center on the Black Hills State University

can."

Manning

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ning's former offensive coordinator, as a consultant last ison — although it's unclear if he'll be back.

Despite the Jets' recent success under Ryan, the locker-room discord might be a deterrent for Manning. He also might be unwilling to play in the circus atmosphere of New York, a town in which Eli has become a huge star. Think the city's media would play up the sibling rivalry? Salary cap issues also might prevent the Jets from being a true contender, financially.

Seattle

Seattle has its franchise running back in Marshawn Lynch, and seems to be solid on the outside with receivers Sidney Rice, Mike Williams, Doug Baldwin and tight end Zach Miller. The offensive line is young and improved, but the remaining question for Seattle's offense is at quarter-

Tarvaris Jackson toughed his way through a painful pectoral injury for more than half of last season, but was pectoral injury for more trian riain or last season, but was never overly impressive. Manning could be the answer. Still, Jackson has never been given much of a chance as a starter and played fairly well while battling his injury and was respected in the locker room.

Fans have already started a "Come Back, Peyton'

The Titans drafted Jake Locker with the No. 8 pick last April and signed Matt Hasselbeck to a three-year deal last July, but they went 9-7. They have around \$30 million in

cap space they need to use on finding a pass rush.

While a happy homecoming would make for a nice
story, general manager Ruston Webster has said twice in

the past month — to season-ticket holders — and at the

Washington

it comes to signing big-name free agents, and the Red-skins are in major need of a quarterback.

Mike Shanahan has whiffed on three (Donovan McNabb, Rex Grossman and John Beck) in his two years in Washington, and the Redskins are expected to pursue Manning if they can determine he's healthy. They have plenty of cap space, and the Redskins can lobby Manning

CHAMPIONSHIP

MOMENTS

by saying they'll use that room to be aggressive in free agency.

But that also could make them less appealing to Manning, since they're lacking at so many positions

AP Sports Writers Bob Baum, Tim Booth, Mike Marot, Dave Skretta, Arnie Stapleton, Teresa M. Walker, Joseph White and Steven Wine contributed to this story.



year, so they all got good playing time.'

Wynot's first round opponent, Falls City Sacred Heart (16-8), is making its first appearance at state since 2009 and 16th overall. The Irish won the D2 title in 2008.

Of Sacred Heart's eight losses, four have come by three or fewer

It's much the same case for the Blue Devils, with both losses coming by five or fewer. Even with so many new players to the mix this



Thursday, March 8

7:40 a.m. Yankton Chamber of Commerce 8:20 a.m. Yankton Conv/Vis Bureau 8:45 a.m. Polar Plunge

Friday, March 9 7:40 a.m. South Dakota Magazine 8:20 a.m.

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season, they have been able to overcome any early worries. 'The team kept improving,"

Heimes said. "Getting the chemistry back down took a while. The starters were role players a year ago, and that takes a while.

But now, Wynot will have to use that confidence on the state's

biggest stage, its coach said.

It's a different environment down there, for sure," Heimes said. 'You just have to figure out that you belong down there, and you can win just like anybody else can.

These guys have the confidence," he added. "They're ready for the challenge.'

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