

# Pheasants Continue To Fly High

## No. 2 Parker Unbeaten As It Looks To Return To State Tour.

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PARKER — As it searched for a source of motivation entering the 2012 season, the Parker volleyball team, as it turns out, found more than one.

How does three sound? The second-ranked Class B and unbeaten Pheasants (25-0) have stormed out of the gate following a third-place finish at the state tournament a year ago. Winners of 58 of its last 60 matches, Parker hasn't exactly come out of nowhere.

Still, there was that slight concern that after graduating four key players, there might be a drop-off.

"We didn't want people to think that we were down; that we would take a step back this year," senior outside hitter Micalanne Hanten said prior to a home match with Scotland last Thursday night.

"We tried not to think about it, but it motivated us."

Motivator No. 1 came during the Camp of Aces hosted by Dakota State University in Madison at the end of July.

Teri Clemens, a former Division III coach who led Washington University in St. Louis to seven national championships, instilled the phrase, "Play Every Point Like It's Your Last" that has since been adopted as Parker's motto.

"These girls look at it as their team; they want to be the leaders," head coach Jill Christensen said. "They want to do it for Parker and for themselves, too."

Stepping in as leaders this season have been six seniors — Hanten, Kim Leber (OH), Jessica McKenney (RH), Jaime Haase (MH), Tessa Weeldreyer (MH/OH) and Amber Dysthe (S).

It's that depth, along with junior libero Morgan Hay among others, that has keyed the Pheasants to quality wins like they had Saturday against fellow Class B power Arlington.



JEREMY HOECK/P&D

**ABOVE:** Parker head volleyball coach Jill Christensen, center, instructs her team prior to last Thursday's home match with Scotland. Christensen, the state's all-time leader in volleyball coaching victories, has the Pheasants off to a 25-0 start and the second spot in the latest South Dakota Sportswriters volleyball poll.

**BELOW:** Parker seniors Amber Dysthe, left, and Micalanne Hanten are all smiles after a point during last Thursday against Scotland. The pair have been a big part of a lineup that has overcome the graduations of four players from last year's state tournament team.



## EPJ Wins Inter-State Battle

ELK POINT — The Elk Point-Jefferson Huskies improved to 2-0 in a stretch of three straight matches against out-of-state foes with a 23-25, 25-23, 25-20, 25-22 victory over South Sioux City, Neb., on Monday in Elk Point.

The Huskies started the stretch with a victory at Akron-Westfield (Iowa) on Oct. 6. EPJ travels to Homer, Neb., on Thursday. After a match at Tea Area, the Huskies have one more match against an out-of-state foe, facing Ponca, Neb., on Oct. 19.

Keely Bertram had 17 kills and 14 digs, and Amy Zeller had 15 kills and 22 digs to lead EPJ (13-7). Hope Erickson finished with 26 assists and seven digs. Audrey Truhe posted 14 assists and six digs. Skylore Curry had seven kills and three ace serves, and Kelsey Abbey had a team-best 25 digs in the victory.

For South Sioux City, Morgan Hansen had 20 kills, 20 digs and four blocks. Julia Hartnett had 36 assists and five kills. Beth Hubbard finished with eight kills and seven blocks. Tori Hartnett had seven kills and three blocks. Tori Hartnett also had seven kills and Jordan Buttermore had 34 digs for the Cardinals.

South Sioux City, 6-11, plays a pair of Sioux City, Iowa, programs, North and Bishop Heelan, on Thursday.

SOUTH SIOUX CITY (6-11) .....	25	23	20	22
ELK POINT-JEFFERSON (13-7) .....	23	25	25	25

## Saturday

### Norfolk Cath. 2, Wynot 1

WISNER, Neb. — Class C1 power Norfolk Catholic beat Wynot 22-25, 25-21, 25-18 for the championship of the Wisner-Pilger Inv. on Saturday.

Maggie Schulte had 10 kills and Sam Wieseler had five kills and nine digs to lead Wynot. Erica Burbach posted 10 assists, 10 digs and five ace serves. Jenna Heine had 11 assists and seven digs. Zoey Heimes had 10 digs, Ashley Heine and Kelsie Higgins had nine digs each, and Shelby Hochstein added two ace serves in the effort.

NORFOLK CATHOLIC .....	22	25	25
WYNOT (10-4) .....	25	21	18

## 4-1 Vikings Confident, Not Comfortable

BY DAVE CAMPBELL  
AP Pro Football Writer

EDEN PRAIRIE, Minn. (AP) — The Minnesota Vikings weren't supposed to be in first place this season. Not even five games in.

But here they are at 4-1, tied with Chicago and two games ahead of Green Bay in the NFC North. The victories haven't been flukes, either. Their defense has given up only three touchdowns in the last three games, two of them in the fourth quarter with a healthy lead already established. The offense has been balanced. The special teams have been superb.

"It's exciting to know that every week you have a chance. It's exciting to know that with so many questions going into this year, it's exciting to answer 'OK, if we play our best, we have a chance to beat anybody in the NFL,'" defensive end Jared Allen said. "And we're pretty darn good if we play our best."

Allen watched several of his well-paid veteran teammates move on during the offseason as general manager Rick Spielman and head coach Leslie Frazier tried to renew the roster with youth and potential. Allen was well aware of the 23 losses by the Vikings in 32 games over the last two years, but that didn't mean he liked this.

"Honestly, I was a little upset. Kind of like baffled, not really knowing what direction we're going," Allen said. "But that's why you have to put trust in the front office, trust in the coach. That's their job. My job is to prepare and do what I need to do to help our team win. After going through training camp and watching these guys, how hard they work and seeing our young guys really step up and take leadership roles and just play football, it's been fun."

This is a confident team, as quarterback Christian Ponder and several others made clear following the 30-7 victory over Tennessee on Sunday.

"I know everyone else is surprised that we're 4-1. What stinks is what we should be 5-0," Ponder said, referring to the 23-20 loss at Indianapolis on Sept. 16.

That defeat was sobering, so much that soft-spoken veteran cornerback Antoine Winfield de-

## Vikings' Smith Won't Be Punished More For Pushing Referee

EDEN PRAIRIE, Minn. (AP) — Minnesota Vikings strong safety Harrison Smith won't be punished further for his shove of an official that drew a 15-yard penalty and automatic ejection from Sunday's game against Tennessee.

Vikings coach Leslie Frazier said Monday that the team was told by the NFL that Smith won't be fined or suspended. The rookie was pulled away from a tussle with some Titans players by back judge Steve Freeman after an interception by the Vikings in the second quarter, when Smith pushed Freeman aside.

Smith apologized after the game for what he called an "unacceptable" action and said he was wrong for even being involved in the scrum in the first place. The Vikings won 30-7 despite his absence.

"You can never touch the officials. They have a hard

enough job as it is, and to make it harder on them is just stupid," Smith said after the game. "It's something I don't ever want to do from this point on."

NFL spokesman Greg Aiello said Monday that Smith's disqualification from the majority of the game was a "significant penalty." That determination was made by the league's executive vice president of football operation Ray Anderson.

Smith was disqualified with 11:24 left before halftime, meaning he missed the final 41:24, more than two-thirds of the game.

"We've got to be able to handle our emotions when things get awry, and he knows that," Frazier said. "He and I have talked about it, and going forward we've got to do a better job across the board when moments like that occur."

Following the attention-getting upset of NFC favorite San Francisco and the character-building road win over Detroit, the Vikings faced another hurdle on Sunday in the Titans. This was the time for an improving team to show it's mature enough to decisively beat a struggling opponent, and that's what they did.

Afterward, the Vikings went out of their way to express caution about enjoying the strong start too much, even after all they've endured over the last two years. Despite their self-assurance, they've been so far acting like a team that's been in front before, even though so few of the current players (16 of 53) were around in 2009 when Brett Favre and that bunch reached the NFC championship game.

"We're all believing in each other," wide receiver Percy Harvin said, adding: "We've still got a lot of work to do. Regardless of our record or how good we're doing right now this team is in no way satisfied."

## Mueller Leads After NSIC First Round

BRAINERD, Minn. — Sioux Falls' Jordan Mueller shot a 1-under 71 to sit atop the leader board after the opening round of the Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference men's golf tournament, which began Monday at Madden's Resort on Gull Lake in Brainerd, Minn.

Mueller, a senior from Yankton, holds a one-stroke lead over Charlie West of St. Cloud State.

St. Cloud State holds the team lead at 307, eight strokes ahead of Sioux Falls and 10 up on Augustana.

Round two of the four-round event is today (Tuesday) in Brainerd. Rounds three and four will be played April 13-14 at Jewel Golf Club in Lake City, Minn.

## Nebraska State C Girls

COLUMBUS, Neb. — Crofton's Mariah Zavadii is tied for 61st after the opening day of the Nebraska State Class C Girls' Golf tournament, being held in Columbus, Neb.

Zavadii shot a 111 on the opening day. She is the lone area golfer qualified for the event.

Ogallala leads the Class C race with a 365, four strokes better than Grand Island Central Catholic.

GICC's McKenna Kime leads the individual standings with an 82, four strokes better than teammate Erin Boon and Ogallala's Maika Mestl.

The tournament concludes today (Tuesday).

## Cards Rout Nationals To Even Series

ST. LOUIS (AP) — Carlos Beltran hit the last two of the Cardinals' four homers and St. Louis chased an ineffective Jordan Zimmermann early in a 12-4 rout of the Washington Nationals on Monday that tied their NL division series at one game apiece.

Allen Craig and Daniel Descalso also went deep to help the defending World Series champions build a big lead that compensated for a two-inning start from an ailing Jaime Garcia. Craig hit his fifth career postseason homer and scored three times.

Ryan Zimmerman and Adam LaRoche hit consecutive homers in the fifth for the Nationals, who head home for the remainder of the best-of-five series. But the NL East champions are without All-Star ace Stephen Strasburg, shut down for the rest of the season early last month to protect his surgically repaired arm.

Game 3 is Wednesday afternoon at Nationals Park. Edwin Jackson starts for Washington against longtime Cardinals ace Chris Carpenter, who made only three starts during the regular season because of injury.

"Today, for us, was a must-win game," Beltran said.

The Cardinals seem to live for those. They lost the division series

and NL championship series openers last fall, then finished strong in the World Series after spotting Texas a 3-2 lead.

So, they're on familiar ground. There were no lineup changes in Game 2 of the division series, just a lot more clutch hitting from players accustomed to October pressure.

Beltran homered twice in the postseason for the third time in his career, connecting in the sixth off Mike Gonzalez and eighth off Sean Burnett. Jon Jay had two hits and three RBIs, plus an outstanding catch at the center-field wall to deprive Danny Espinosa of extra bases in the sixth.

St. Louis was 0 for 8 with runners in scoring position in Game 1 and totaled just three hits. The Cardinals had five hits in a four-run second Monday. Descalso hit his first postseason homer in the fourth a day after getting robbed by Jayson Werth's leaping catch at the right-field wall, and Beltran's drive off Gonzalez in the sixth banged off the facade in the third deck in left, estimated at 444 feet.

Shadows didn't seem to be as big of an issue in Game 2, which started 1 1/2 hours later than the opener, creeping past the pitcher's mound around the third inning. Both teams had issues with playing conditions after the opener.

## STATE SOFTBALL CHAMPS



SUBMITTED PHOTO

**The Yankton White squad won the S.D. State Middle School Softball Tournament, which concluded this past weekend in Sioux Falls. Team members include (front) Larkyn Mason, (second) Grace Tolliver, Payton Vellek, (third) Coach Amanda Sparks, Megan McCorkell, Bridget Nolz, Brooke Madson, Kara Ulmer, Elsie Marquardt, Bailey Sejnoha, Lilly Ryken, Chloe Koletzky, Ivy Mines and (back) Coach Mark Vellek.**