

SPORTS



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QUICK HITS

LOCAL

Fusion 12U team ends season at national tourney

The International Falls Fusion 12U softball team closed out its season last weekend at the Class B Northern National Tournament in Eagan with a pair of wins and three losses.

In “pool play,” the Fusion went 2-1.

The Fusion opened the tournament in pool play winning 5-3 over the Cooper-Armstrong Heat with Marissa Kerry picking up the pitching victory.

The second pool play game saw the Fusion come up a run short to the Farmington Bengal Tigers, 6-5, with Mariah Leahy being the losing pitcher.

In the final game of pool play, the Fusion shut out the Chanhassen Gold, 2-0.

The Fusion ended up in the tournament’s “Red Bracket” after pool play and dropped both of their games, losing 4-0 to a team from Kishwaukee Valley and then 3-2 to Eagan.

Junior League loses two tourney games

The season came to an end for the International Falls Junior League baseball team at last weekend’s District Four Tournament in Hibbing.

The Falls opened the tournament with an 11-5 loss to Greenway and then was eliminated in a 13-2 loss to Hibbing.

Falls’ Junior League had two separate teams during the regular-season schedule and then combined into one team for the district tournament.

Falls Little League All-Stars end seasons

The International Falls Little League All-Star teams wrapped up their seasons earlier this month after being eliminated in their respective district tournaments in Grand Rapids.

Falls’ 9-10 team opened its tournament with a loss to Greenway, 8-6, and then lost in the elimination game to Hibbing, 13-3.

Falls’ 10-11 team lost to Itasca, 10-0, and also lost in the elimination game to Greenway, 15-6.

Falls’ 11-12 team lost to Itasca, 10-2, beat Greenway, 10-4, and then lost in an elimination game to Virginia, 6-5.

MINNESOTA

Vikings to keep camp at MSU through 2015

MANKATO (AP) — The Minnesota Vikings have agreed on a three-year contract with Minnesota State University to continue their training camp on the Mankato campus through 2015.

The deal was announced this week. Players reported to camp Thursday, which began the team’s 48th season training at MSU. Back then, off-site camps were the norm in the NFL. This season, the Vikings are in the minority, one of only 13 teams training away from headquarters. The other 19 practice year-round at their own facilities.

One change for players this time is their lodging. After living in the twin Gage towers for all but one year previously, the Vikings are in the newer Sears residence just to the north of where the old dorms once stood. They were torn down this summer.

VFW BASEBALL



STAFF PHOTO BY KEVIN BONESKE

The Falls VFW’s Ben Humbert threw a complete-game shutout against Grand Rapids and also recorded a save against Hibbing in last weekend’s North Sub-District Tournament to help the Falls earn a No. 1 seed in the District 8 Tournament that begins today.

Falls opens district tourney in Rapids vs. Hermantown

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

The International Falls VFW baseball team brings its top seed in the North Sub-District to Legion Park in Grand Rapids to open the eight-team, double-elimination District 8 Tournament at noon today against the South’s No. 4 seed, Hermantown.

The winner will advance to the winners’ bracket to play at 5:30 p.m. today at Portage Park in Cohasset against the opening-round winner between the North’s No. 3 seed, Grand Rapids, and the south’s No. 2 seed, Moose Lake.

The losers of those two opening games will play each other in a losers’ bracket game at 2:30 p.m. today at Legion Park in Grand Rapids.

The other four teams in the tournament include the South’s No. 1 seed, Duluth East, the North’s No. 2 seed, Hibbing, the South’s No. 3 seed, Esko, and the North’s No. 4 seed, Greenway.

Hibbing plays its first game against Esko at 10 a.m. today, while Duluth East opens the tournament against Greenway at 12:30 p.m. today with both games taking place at Portage Park in Cohasset.

The tournament, which will be narrowed to six teams after today’s games, resumes on Monday with all the remaining games taking place at Legion Park in Grand Rapids.

The tournament could end Tuesday night if one team remains undefeated to become the district champion and the other teams all end up with two losses. In the event two teams remain after Tuesday night with one loss each, a final championship game will be held at 7 p.m. Wednesday with the winner advancing to next month’s state tournament in Ely.

Grover takes over as Falls athletic director

BY KEVIN BONESKE
Sports Editor

Filling two winter head coaching vacancies and deciding what to do about the situation with teachers being out of the classroom to coach are just two matters new Falls athletic director Kevin Grover finds himself involved in.

Grover, who has been working full-time in the Falls school district in various positions since 1998, took over the athletic director duties this month from Don Rolando, who held the position since 2007 before resigning to become a full-time teacher.

Upon becoming the athletic director, Grover noted he won’t be teaching in 2013-14 — he taught two math classes this past school year — and will instead be a full-time dean of students and athletic director.

“I will miss the teaching aspect, but it’s just another venue (to work with students),” he said.

His background in athletics includes playing high school hockey and golf at Park Rapids. He has also been a junior high golf coach in the Falls, as well as a scorekeeper/announcer at Bronco hockey and basket-



Kevin Grover

ball games.

Grover said he met with Rolando toward the end of this past school year to become familiar with the athletic director’s responsibilities.

“The nice part is with scheduling of events, most of the fall stuff is ready to go right now,” said Grover, who noted most of the scheduling left to do for the upcoming school year involves spring events.

Grover said he has contacted “quite a few” of the area’s athletic directors, who would be also available if he would have any questions.

“I’m always willing to learn,” he said. “That’s part of being an educator.”

Grover now faces filling coaching vacancies with a pair of wintertime head coaches not returning after two seasons.

Bruce Elson’s head boys hockey coaching contract was not renewed this month and Hailey Silvers resigned last week as the head boys swimming and diving coach.

The district’s policy on coaches states the assistant coaching positions also become vacant when there is a head coaching vacancy to allow the assistants to apply to be the head coach, who would be able to recommend assistants.

“My speculation the reason (for that policy) is we want (newly-hired head coaches) involved with selecting someone that they are in favor of working with, maybe having similar coaching philosophy,” Grover said.

Grover is presently part of a study committee, along with high school principal Tim Everson and three school board members, looking into the situation with teachers being out of the classroom to coach.

The issue came up ear-

lier this summer when the board tabled action on rehiring Jay Boyle as an assistant girls basketball coach.

Boyle, a math teacher at Falls High School, has been coaching all three seasons during the school year as a head football coach, assistant girls basketball coach and assistant track and field coach.

At the study committee’s first meeting earlier this week, Grover said the committee began to look at the concern about teachers who coach “missing quite a bit of school.”

“The concern that’s been raised is the amount of times the teachers/coaches — and when I say that I mean the teachers who are coaches — are being absent from the classroom,” he said.

While Grover believes athletics are beneficial for students, he said, “Our first mission is academics, and that’s where the concern is.”

Grover said he “would hate to speculate right now” what the committee will end up recommending to the board about the situation with teachers who coach.

Along with the issue of teachers being out of the classroom to coach, he said

the district has also had difficulty in the past filling coaching vacancies.

Once the sports seasons begin for the upcoming school year, Grover said he expects he will be on hand for about 30 percent of the sporting events and will have other staff members handle the other 70 percent of what is known as “site supervision.”

“Winter is the main one — we have multiple things going on at once — those might be the nights that I take on the supervision,” he said.

By being both the dean of students and athletic director, Grover said he will have flexibility as to when during the school day he will be able to carry out the responsibilities of both positions.

“I don’t think that the amount of time (to handle athletic director duties) really has changed,” he said. “It’s pretty much an hour (of work during the school day).”

Grover said he will be designated in 2013-14 as a “teacher on special assignment” as the district sees how a combination dean of students and athletic director will function as he “works through the kinks.”

Despite major progress, Vikings must prove more

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The Minnesota Vikings have reached a crossroad, coming off a remarkable season during which they improved by seven victories, made the playoffs and watched Adrian Peterson transition from ACL rehab patient to MVP award winner.

Slip back a bit, and 2013 will likely be widely viewed as a disappointment. To pick up where their progress left off last year, though, the Vikings will need just as much to go right as in that surprising 2012 season. Similar to last year, when they were coming off a 3-13 mess, the Vikings have again set out amid skepticism from analysts and fans about whether they’re built to stay on a title-contending track.

By the end of 2013, they’ll know whether last season was simply a fluke or a foundation for the future.

“Super Bowl: I know that’s the goal as a group,”



FILE PHOTO

Minnesota’s Adrian Peterson (28) found open running room in last year’s regular-season finale against Green Bay at the Metrodome when he rushed for 199 yards in the Vikings’ 37-34 victory over the Packers. Peterson returned in 2012 from reconstructive surgery on his left knee to rush for 2,097 yards, 9 short of the NFL season record, and was named the league’s Most Valuable Player.

Peterson said at the end of minicamp. “I feel like we’ve got the right pieces in place.

Everyone has that vision in their mind.”

Five things to know about

the Vikings as camp begins:

1. PONDERING THE FUTURE: Christian Pon-

der will be the starter when the Vikings open at Detroit on Sept. 8. But he has a lot to prove before his status is ensured for next year, let alone for the rematch against the Lions that wraps up the regular season on Dec. 29.

This time, the Vikings have a better option as a backup in Matt Cassel. General manager Rick Spielman has often said he needs three years to evaluate quarterbacks, bringing the former first-round draft pick into a crucial window. Not only does Ponder have a stronger offensive line, his receivers have been upgraded over that span, too, despite the departure of the do-it-all Percy Harvin. Greg Jennings was signed from Green Bay to be the leader, Jerome Simpson was brought back on another low-risk one-year contract and Cordarrelle Patterson was selected with the third of three late first-round

Vikings to B2 ►