

Tennis starts sports season in Cimarron



Junior Jillian Parker returned a ball to her practice partner during the Cowgirls' practice session Monday morning. Photo by Greg Stover/The Goodland Star-News

The Cowgirls tennis team leads off the Goodland High fall sports season with a trip to Cimarron on Thursday for a tournament. Other teams expected there include Hays, St. John-Hudson and Greeley County high schools.

Coach Wally Hansen has five players back from last year's squad. Between them, they have 12 seasons worth of experience on the courts for the Cowgirls.

Back for their fourth season are seniors Kali Rietcheck and Megan Stefan. Returning for their third season are juniors Jillian Parker, Jena McCall and Sandy Johnson. All five played in the regional tournament in Pratt last October.

Freshman joining the team this fall are Kathy Wood, Shonna Webster and Kaitlin Fugelberg. Although the three do not bring a lot of experience with them, Hansen said they are enthusiastic at practice and are eager to learn.

Junior Josh Cech, who played tennis for the Cowboys his freshman and sophomore years, is the team's manager.

"These early meets put pressure on us to be ready quickly," Hansen said. "To us, the first meet or two are preparatory for the rest for the season."

The Cowgirls have seven varsity tournaments on the schedule before the regionals on October 5. Even those players who will not see much varsity action will get plenty of experience, Hansen said, as anticipates Goodland participating in three or four junior varsity tournaments this season.

Hansen said the team is planning to leave Goodland early Thursday morning for the two-to-three-hour trip to Cimarron, which is about 35 miles east of Garden City on U.S. 50.

The Cowgirls hit the courts again at 2 p.m. (Mountain Time) next Tuesday for a tournament in Phillipsburg, followed by one in Colby on Saturday, Sept. 3. The Goodland Invitational, the team's only home event, will be Tuesday, Sept. 13.

'Wimpy' not limited to Big 12

Last month, I made my second annual "brave vs. wimpy" Big 12 Conference opening football game comparison, rating the conference more wimpy than brave by a 7-5 decision.

Unfortunately, being wimpy is not limited to the Big 12. Most of the perennial NCAA Division I-A powerhouses pad their records early with a couple of "easy" games, many of which end up as little more than well-attended scrimmages.

However, there are a couple of exceptions.

Four of the teams in the USA Today/ESPN Top 25 coaches' preseason poll will try to establish their dominance earlier than most. The



greg stover

• greg's gripes

Hurricanes of the University of Miami, ranked No. 8, open their season against the Seminoles of No. 12 Florida State University.

A little further north, No. 19 Boise State University visits No. 13 University of Georgia to take on the Bulldogs.

These four are being extra bold by being willing to make or break

their season in their openers.

In Division I volleyball, the opposite seems to be true. Of the top 25 teams in the American Volleyball Coaches Association's preseason poll, 12

open their season in a tournament involving at least one other top 25 team.

Four of the top five teams play each other at a tournament this weekend in Lincoln, Neb. The Cornhuskers, the host team, are the preseason poll's top pick, earning 35 of 60 first-place votes. Other teams in the tournament are No. 3 Stanford University, the defending national champion; No. 4 University of Hawaii; and No. 5 Penn State.

While I'm not comparing volleyball to football — each sport is unique requiring its own strategy for a successful season — I do think a football team will find it easier to

get to the top by taking on tough challengers earlier rather than later in the season.

Another consideration is that history has proved it's easier for a team to climb back up in the rankings after a tough loss early than to maintain a top position after a late-season loss.

I understand some of the reasons why some football teams are "wimpy" for their season openers. Some coaches want a weaker opponent to start the season to see how their athletes perform under game conditions while still getting an almost certain win. Others like the idea of playing weaker teams so they can open their seasons with three or four straight home games.

For the weaker teams, it's a chance to share in the gate receipts which might earn the school more money in the one game than the rest of the season combined. Plus, there's always the possibility of an upset and the prestige that would bring to an otherwise mediocre program.

Football kicks off

The 2005 college football season kicks off Thursday with at least 10 games across the nation, all involving NCAA Division II teams.

Four other Division II teams open their seasons on Friday. Nearly all the remaining teams will play their first game on Saturday, along with about a quarter of the teams belonging to the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics.

The majority of junior college teams also open their seasons on Saturday, including all eight football-playing schools of the Kansas Jayhawk Community College Conference.

Sophomore Jared Duke and the Blue Dragons of Hutchinson Community College will try to get their first win of the season when they visit Memorial Stadium in Dodge City to face the Conquistadors.

Freshmen David Livengood and Derrick Raymer will be on the field for their first college football game when Garden City Community College plays host to Fort Scott Community College.

Hutchinson is ranked No. 16 in the National Junior College Athletic Association preseason poll while Garden City is No. 24.

Freshman Brock Lohr and the Gorillas of Pittsburg State University open their 2005 campaign at home against the Statesmen of Delta State University. The Gorillas were 14-1 last season, losing to Valdosta State University 36-31 in

the NCAA Division II national championship.

Other games Saturday involving Kansas teams include Emporia State University at Fort Hays State and Washburn at the Colorado

Goodland Cowgirls

2005 Girls Varsity Golf

Sept. 1	at WaKeeney	2 p.m.
Sept. 6	Goodland Invitational	1 p.m.
Sept. 12	at Hays	8 a.m.
Sept. 19	at Colby	2 p.m.
Sept. 22	at Scott City	2 p.m.
Sept. 27	at Ulysses	9 a.m.
Oct. 1	at Lakin	8:30 a.m.
Oct. 6	at Syracuse	noon
Oct. 10	Regional Tournament	TBA
Oct. 17	State Tournament	TBA

Note: All times shown are Mountain Time

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School calendar for Aug. 24 - Aug. 30

Welcome Back Students and Faculty

Wednesday - First Day of School; fall coaches meeting in Colby, 6 p.m.

Thursday - "Black Day"; Lifetouch Sports Picture Day; varsity tennis in Cimarron, 7:30 a.m.

Friday - "Gold Day"; Black and Gold Club Membership BBQ, 5 p.m.; football and cross country soap scrimmage at Cowboy Stadium, 5:30 p.m.; cross country parent meeting, 6:15 p.m.

Sunday - FCCLA AIMS Conference in Hesston, 4 p.m.

Monday - FCCLA AIMS Conference in Hesston, 4 p.m.

Tuesday - "Gold Day"; varsity tennis in Phillipsburg, 2 p.m.

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