

SPORTS



A SWEET SWEEP

Willmar boys, girls both win CLC cross country championships

By Joe Brown and Jake Schultz
Tribune Sports

Willmar

One Willmar cross country team maintained its place atop the Central Lakes Conference.

Another one returned after a six-year hiatus.

For the first time since 2012, the Cardinal girls and boys are both conference champions after Tuesday's CLC championship meet at Eagle Creek Golf Club.

"All seven of our boys were All Conference or honorable mention. And last week, Sartell beat us here pretty easily, so that was a huge turnaround," said Willmar head coach Jerry Popp. "The girls, they had a good day

but not a great day. If the girls pull it all together, they'll be pretty formidable."

Thanks to a 2-3-4 finish from Serena Monson, Leah Hansen and Heidi Schmitz, the Willmar girls won their

seventh straight CLC championship with 40 points, holding off Alexandria (52) and Rocori (56).

"We've been going back-and-forth a lot," Monson said about the competition between

teammates. She ran a time of 19 minutes, 21.7 seconds, bested only by Sartell's Ingrid Buiceag-Arama's 19:18.2.

Monson added, "We all push each other and it's

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Madison adds punch to NLS' attack

Wildcats' dominant new weapon has team optimistic about section crown

By Jake Schultz
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NEW LONDON — Payton Madison says his favorite part about playing football is blocking.

"Um, touchdowns?" New London-Spicer quarterback and teammate Brandon Adelman said incredulously.

OK, so maybe blocking is the senior running back's second favorite part of football. But one glance at the towering Madison and it's clear the worst part of football for most of his opponents is trying to wrap him up. In a

world where athletes and coaches fudge heights and weights for competitive advantage and deception, Madison fills out every bit of his listed 6-foot-4, 235-pound frame.

Madison is new to the Wildcats' varsity team this season, although he grew up in New London-Spicer school district and played football with his current teammates growing up. But rather than follow his friends into the high school football path, he hit the road to play junior hockey in Omaha, Nebraska.

A standout forward, Madison played 22 games for the Omaha AAA Lancers' 16-and-under team in the North American Prospects Hockey League during the 2016-2017 school year. After one year in the junior hockey circuit, Madison decided he was ready to return home, although that meant sitting out the fall semester due to Minnesota State High School League policy.

Except that wasn't entirely true, either. Madison, a man among boys

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Jake Schultz / Tribune

New London-Spicer's Payton Madison runs down the line with a pair of Holy Family defenders in his wake in an Aug. 30 game at New London-Spicer High School.



Tom Larson / West Central Tribune

Benson's Claire Ricard, middle, fires a shot over Montevideo's Jasmyn Kronback (9) and Madalyn Kilbarda (4) during a match on Tuesday at Benson High School.

Benson downs Montevideo in four

Willmar wraps up CLC championship at Apollo

By Jake Schultz and Joe Brown
Tribune Sports

BENSON — Benson jumped out to a two-set lead and fended off Montevideo's rally with a strong fourth set on Tuesday at Benson High School.

Benson won 25-21, 25-15, 23-25 and 25-15.

The Braves' Claire Ricard had 13 kills and a pair of solo blocks and Rachel Berens had 12 kills, three service aces and a pair of solo blocks.

Mariah Ahrndt had 21 set assists, served three aces and also had eight kills and 12 digs.

Ellie Moesenthin had 12 set assists and 12 digs.

Benson 3, Montevideo 1

Montevideo (9-18) 21 15 25 15

Benson (8-14) 25 25 23 25

Montevideo

Stats not provided

Benson

Serving (aces): Mariah Ahrndt 3, Rachel Berens 3, Zoe Doscher 2, Ellie Moesenthin 1, Maranda Wieber 1, Abbie Mitteness 1 ... Set

assists: Ahrndt 21, Berens 2, Moesenthin 12, Mitteness 4 ... Hitting (kills): Ahrndt 8, Berens 12, Beth Cain 2, Wieber 1, Claire Ricard 13, Abby Lundebrek 1, Mitteness 1 ... Blocking (aces): Ahrndt 1, Berens 2, Ricard 2, Lundebrek 1 ... Digs (5 or more): Ahrndt 12, Doscher 7, Moesenthin 8, Wieber 12, Mitteness 19

Willmar 3, St. Cloud Apollo 0

For the second straight year, Willmar wrapped up the Central Lakes Conference championship after sweeping St. Cloud Apollo on the road Tuesday, 25-8, 25-17, 25-15.

"Winning it last year was a surprise, so trying to repeat this year was a goal of ours," said Cardinals head coach Traci Grussing. "Not only winning it but going undefeated in the conference is special."

With Cambrie Parker (four ace serves, 10 digs) holding serve, Willmar was able to jump out to a huge lead early en route to the sweep. Caitlin Ogdahl had a team-high 14 kills with four ace serves, and Carly Wedel came up with 33 set assists, five kills, eight digs and a block. Starting

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The perfect pregame speech, featuring Vikings QB Kirk Cousins

By Dane Mizutani
St. Paul Pioneer Press

EAGAN, Minn. — To the shock of most of his teammates, Kirk Cousins barreled into the pregame huddle a couple of weeks ago with the Vikings ready to run onto the field for kickoff against the Philadelphia Eagles.

"I'm changing it up today!" Cousins screamed. "I've got it, guys!"

With everyone's eyes fixated on him, the 30-year-old quarterback ripped off his helmet, fixed his hair, and dove headfirst into a passionate 30-second sermon. The son of a preacher, he mixed fire and fury with a few choice words (sorry, Dad) following his grand entrance.

"We talked all week

about finishing!" Cousins hollered as his pregame speech built toward a crescendo. "Finish every block! Finish every tackle! Finish every play! Finish the damn game!"

That got the Vikings pumped and headed toward a rousing 23-21 victory over the reigning Super Bowl champions. They didn't look anything like the team that lost its previous two games.

Coincidence?

Well, nose tackle Linval Joseph, who is more or less in charge of the Vikings' pregame speechifying, wasn't ready to mess with the juju. Instead, he implored Cousins to take the mic again before last week's game against the Arizona Cardinals.

"He told me on the flight back, he said, 'You

got it next week,'" Cousins recalled, noting he quickly obliged. "In pregame he looked at me and pointed. That was enough for me to know I better bring it. I gave him the thumbs up."

Once again, Cousins managed to set the Vikings ablaze, this time turning his focus to the defense.

"I've been a rookie quarterback before," Cousins said, referring to Cardinals signal-caller Josh Rosen. "You can suffocate him! Make his life miserable! All game long! Get us the ball back!"

At that point, it seems, Cousins could have started speaking in tongues and it wouldn't have mattered. He was preaching to the choir. He closed sermon with an ode to legendary wrestler Dan Gable.

"I shoot, I score!" Cousins shouted, imploring his teammates to join in. "You shoot, I score!"

What followed was another stellar performance from the Vikings (3-2-1), who beat the Cardinals 27-17.

For those keeping track at home, that means the Vikings are 2-0 when Cousins gives a pregame speech. Not bad for a guy who refers to himself as "a reluctant leader" when it comes to being a vocal presence.

Maybe that's what has made the pregame speeches so effective.

"Well, a guy like Kirk he doesn't really say much, so when he gets in there, he gives us that juice," safety Jayron Kearse said. "It's like, 'Dang. This is Kirk saying this.' It's different from when a guy like Everson Griffen is saying it because he's always juiced up. It's different when it comes from a guy like Kirk because he usually doesn't say much."

While some players, including Kearse, have been surprised by Cousins' recent outbursts, left guard Tom Compton has come to expect them from one of his best friends.

"That's just Kirk," Compton said with a laugh. "He gets fired up. I've seen it before. That's just how he is on game day. He's always ready to go. He's got really good energy, and when a guy has that, he can say pretty much anything to get the guys going."

It raises the question:



James Lang / USA TODAY Sports

Minnesota Vikings quarterback Kirk Cousins huddles with teammates before going out for pregame warmups before the game against the Philadelphia Eagles at Lincoln Financial Field in Philadelphia on Oct. 7.

What is more important in a pregame speech, the words or the energy?

"Just as long as it's from the heart," receiver Laquon Treadwell said. "It has to be real. You have to feel the truth behind it. There's some guys that just got through the motions up there and say whatever. If it's from the heart, we can feel it. That's what he does a good job of. He just speaks from the heart and says what's on his mind at the time."

"It's a healthy combination of both," defensive end Stephen Weatherly added. "Sometimes guys have too much passion and their words get lost. Other times guys have the right words and not the right gusto. He has a great balance of both."

Since becoming the face of the franchise after signing a three-year, \$84 million contract in the offseason, Cousins has been navigating the best ways to lead from his new role. He praised the

team for handing him the keys right away and giving him a license to lead. That said, he wanted to make sure he didn't step on toes along the way, especially considering the team has a locker room full of leaders.

"In Week 6 going into Week 7, I think we're past tiptoeing in," Cousins said. "In April and May there was kind of time to feel my way through things. Maybe a little bit even in July. As soon as the season gets going, it is full steam ahead. I've got to be me and lead anyway I can."

He has been doing that with his stellar play. But lately, that's meant giving the pregame speeches, something Cousins has no problem doing moving forward.

"You'll have to ask Linval," Cousins said when asked if he plans to continue the trend next week against the New York Jets. "It's his show. I just do what he tells me. I try to keep him happy."



Brace Hemmelgarn / USA TODAY Sports

Kirk Cousins (8) celebrates his touchdown during the third quarter against the Arizona Cardinals at U.S. Bank Stadium in Minneapolis on Sunday.



Photos by Troy Taormina / USA TODAY Sports

(Left) Houston Astros third baseman Alex Bregman (2) throws out a Boston Red Sox base runner in the seventh inning of Game 3 of the 2018 ALCS playoff baseball series at Minute Maid Park on Tuesday night. (Right) Boston Red Sox centerfielder Jackie Bradley Jr. (19) watches the ball hit for a grand-slam home run in the eighth inning against the Houston Astros in Game 3.

Bradley, Red Sox slam Astros for 2-1 ALCS lead

Field Level Media

HOUSTON — Jackie Bradley Jr. crushed a two-out grand slam in the eighth inning, and the Boston Red Sox stunned the Houston Astros 8-2 on Tuesday in Game 3 of the American League Championship Series.

The Red Sox grabbed a 2-1 series lead in the best-of-seven set with Game 4 set for Minute Maid Park on Wednesday. The Astros have dropped consecutive games for the first time since Aug. 30-31 against the Los Angeles Angels.

Bradley capped a nightmarish outing for Astros closer Roberto Osuna, who made his series debut and his first appearance in 10 days. Osuna was at first undone by bad luck, with Red Sox shortstop Xander Bogaerts reaching on a swinging bunt with one out before Rafael Devers added a single with two outs on an 0-2 count.

Osuna, who entered seeking to

keep the deficit at 3-2, then grazed pinch hitter Brock Holt on the left foot with a 1-2 pitch to load the bases. He followed by hitting another pinch hitter, Mitch Moreland, with another two-strike pitch to force in a run and extend the deficit to 4-2.

Bradley then drilled a 1-1 fastball into the right field seats, an 386-foot blast.

Red Sox right-hander Nathan Eovaldi (1-0) limited the Astros to two runs on six hits and two walks over six innings. He struck out four. Four Boston relievers blanked the Astros while allowing just one hit total over the final three innings.

Astros left-hander Dallas Keuchel survived a rocky start to his outing, allowing two runs on four hits and two walks over five innings despite surrendering three consecutive hits to open the top of the first inning.

Boston's Mookie Betts, Andrew Benintendi and J.D. Martinez

reached in succession to open the game, with Martinez plating Betts with an opposite-field double to right. Benintendi scored on an RBI groundout from Bogaerts, but Keuchel held the line there.

In the third inning, Houston got a sensational leaping catch at the wall from left fielder Tony Kemp to rob Steve Pearce of a two-RBI hit.

Pearce got his revenge in the sixth, launching a 456-foot solo home run to left off Astros right-hander Joe Smith (0-1), snapping a 2-2 tie in the process.

Eovaldi allowed back-to-back-to-back homers in his previous outing at Minute Maid Park, as a member of the Tampa Bay Rays earlier this season. On Tuesday, he surrendered only an RBI single to Marwin Gonzalez in the first inning and a run-scoring double by Alex Bregman in the fifth.



Brace Hemmelgarn / USA TODAY Sports

Minnesota Wild forward Mikael Granlund (64) celebrates his goal with forward Zach Parise (11) during the second period against the Arizona Coyotes at Xcel Energy Center on Tuesday night.

Staal, Granlund score to lead Wild past scuffling Coyotes

Field Level Media

ST. PAUL — Eric Staal and Mikael Granlund each scored their second goals of the season, and Devan Dubnyk made 31 saves as the Minnesota Wild beat the Arizona Coyotes 2-1 on Tuesday in Saint Paul, Minn.

Staal slipped the puck into an open net after a scramble in front of the goal at 6:18 of the third period following a hard shot by Ryan Suter for the winning goal in a game that featured strong play by goaltenders Dubnyk and Darcy Kuemper.

Brendan Perlini scored on a power play for the Coyotes, who are last in the league with three goals and have not scored an even-strength goal in five games this season. They have been shut out three times.

Dubnyk made a pad save on a point-blank shot by Oliver Ekman-Larsson to protect the Wild's lead with seven minutes remaining. Kuemper had 26 saves in his first start of the season. The Coyotes out-shot the Wild 32-28 and have out-shot their opponents in all five games this season.

Perlini scored on a power play at 13:12 of the first period for a 1-0 lead. Perlini skated in on the right side and flipped a partially screened Kuemper high on his glove side with a shot from high in the slot.

Granlund tied the game at 1 at 3:40 of the second period, beating a partially screened Kuemper high on his glove side with a shot from high in the slot.

Kuemper kept the game tied with two sprawling saves in the second period, stopping Staal on a 3-on-1 break eight minutes into the period and denying Zach Parise from point-blank range with four minutes remaining.

The Wild played without center Mikko Koivu, whose wife went into labor Tuesday afternoon. Koivu has three assists and four points. They suited up only 11 forwards and were down to 10 when center Matt Hendricks left with an apparent left leg injury with 55.6 seconds remaining in the first period and did not return.

