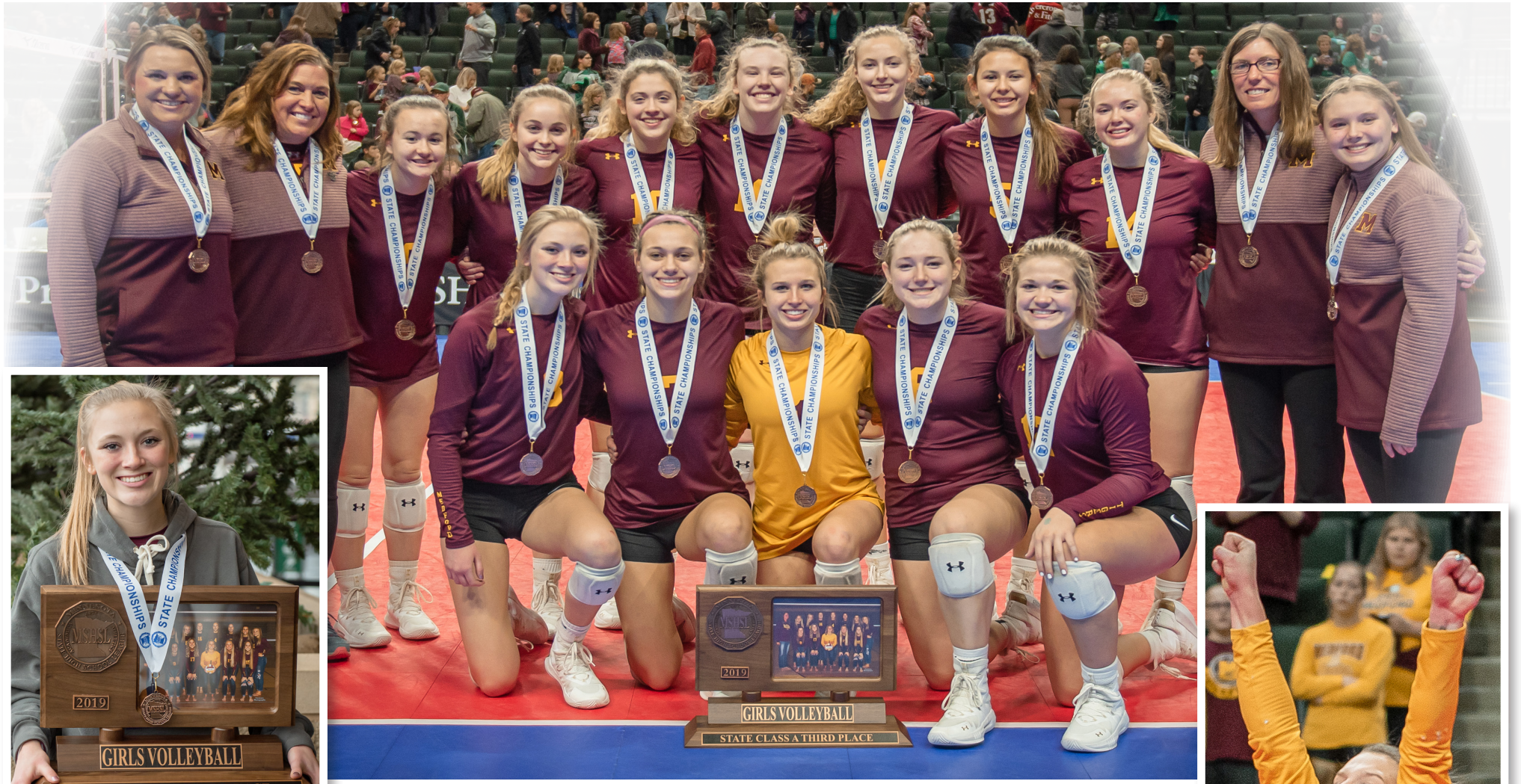




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- | | | |
|-----------------|----------------|------------------|
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| Morgan Cammock | Alyvia Johnson | Rachael Luebbe |
| Clara Kniefel | Kiley Nihart | Morgan Langeslag |
| Isabel Deleon | Emma Kniefel | Kaylee Kern |
| Kelsey Kern | Brooke Purrier | Jenna Berg |
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Head coach: Missy Underdahl



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BACK TO THE BANK

Unbeaten Blossoms roll past Springfield in state playoff opener

BY LEMAR NELSON
SPORTS EDITOR

Senior quarterback Kaden Thomas threw for four touchdowns, and the Awesome Blossom football team punched its ticket to the state semi-finals with a convincing 42-20 victory over Springfield-Comfrey.

The game at Janesville on Saturday, Nov. 9, marked No. 11 in a row for the Blossoms on their inexorable march to U. S. Bank Stadium Saturday, Nov. 16, in an 11:30 a.m. contest.

In what has become a BP trademark, the team put up 21 first quarter points, added 14 in the second quarter, and went into the halftime break with a comfortable 35-7 lead. The defense took over in the second half, giving up a lot of yardage, but keeping Tiger points to a minimum. Two late touchdowns made the final score respectable, after a 74-yard run in the second quarter had given Springfield its first touchdown.

Blooming Prairie's 21 first quarter points were all that they really needed to secure the victory. With about 9:15 left in the first quarter, Matthew Pryor shoved his way across the goal line to score the first touchdown of the game.

BP added another touchdown with 5:20 left in the first.

Karson Vigeland brought some excitement to the field when he had a 64-yard reception with 2:10 left in the first quarter. With:29 left, Pryor scored the third touchdown for the Blossoms with a short one yard run.

The Tigers got on the scoreboard early in the second quarter on a 74-yard run, closing BP's lead to 21-7.

With 1:06 left in the second, Alex Baldwin executed a 39-yard reception for

BP's fourth TD on the afternoon. Colin Jordison added his fourth extra point kick to put the Blossoms in a comfortable 28-7 lead.

Just:06 before halftime, BP added yet another touchdown on a 15-yard reception by Baldwin and extra point by Jordison to give them a 35-7 at halftime.

Springfield put up two touchdowns in the fourth quarter while the Blossoms added another insurance TD.

Thomas found Gabe Hagen and Alec Baldwin for two touchdowns each, one of Baldwin's a 49-yard heave, and Matthew Pryor scored twice on the ground. The team piled up 427 total yards, with Pryor rushing for 132 yards and Thomas tossing the ball for 296.

Hagen caught 7 of 8 attempts for 123 yards, Baldwin caught 10 of 12 for 104 yards, and Karson Vigeland received 4 of 5 for 34 yards. Springfield's offense rolled up 413 total yards, 173 through the air, but the BP defense did not break and held the Tigers to the two touchdowns after the half.

Coach Chad Gimbel again credited the whole team for the win, noting that the absence of turnovers kept the offense on the attack the entire game.

"I thought the defense played well, despite giving up a lot of yardage," he said.

Zach Archer and Garrett Larson both had 10 tackles in the game, but the defense that Gimbel credited was led by Mitch Fiebiger, with a whopping 21 stops. Dylan Nirk added 8 tackles to boot. The defense really did step up, and every Blossom did his part in controlling Springfield. It was a great win that advanced the team to semi-final action.



STAFF PHOTO BY RICK BUSSLER

Mitchell Fiebiger (on the ground) wrestles a Springfield ball carrier to the ground in Saturday's state playoff game with help from Luke Rennie (21) and Bradley Simon (7). The Blossoms scored 21 points in the first quarter and cruised to a 42-20 victory to advance to the state semifinals Saturday at U.S. Bank Stadium.



STAFF PHOTO BY RICK BUSSLER

Karson Vigeland (15) shoves his arm out in an attempt to hold off a Springfield player in Saturday's state playoff thriller in Janesville. BP rolled to its 11th straight victory this season by defeating Springfield 42-20.



STAFF PHOTO BY RICK BUSSLER

Gabe Hagen (8) attempts to pull down and tackle a Springfield ball handler with Bradley Simon (7) coming up from behind.



STAFF PHOTO BY RICK BUSSLER

The Blossoms' Gabe Hagen (8) handles the ball while trying to escape the grip of a Springfield player and another awaiting defender. Hagen caught 7 of 8 attempts for 123 yards in the game.

GAME SUMMARY

Blossoms 42, Springfield 20
Blooming Prairie
Springfield-Comfrey

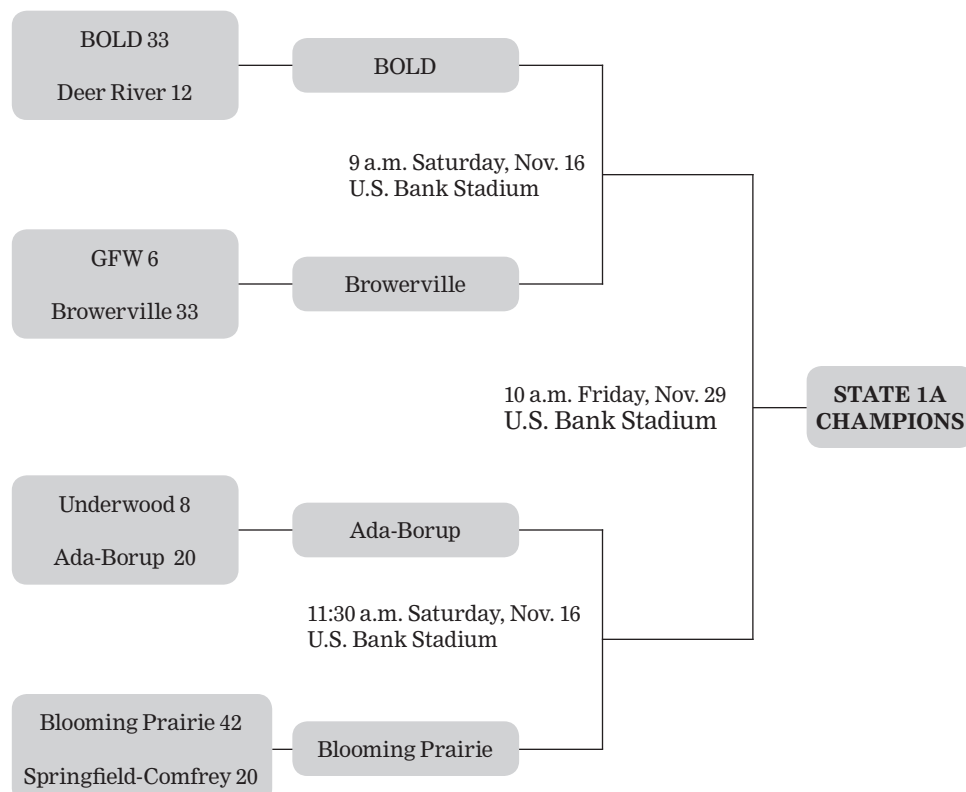
21	14	0	7-	42
0	7	0	13-	20



STAFF PHOTO BY RICK BUSSLER

With only seconds left in the first half, Alex Baldwin (6) cruises into the end zone after a 15-yard reception for another Blossom touchdown. Alex Piller (84) watches as Baldwin scores the touchdown. Blooming Prairie led 35-7 at half time.

Class 1A Football



Medford snags third at state

BY ALEX NUEHRING
SPORTS WRITER

After sweeping Belgrade-Brooten-Elrosa 3-0 in the first round of the state tournament, the Medford Tigers faced a familiar foe, fellow Gopher Conference member Waterville-Elysian-Morristown (W-E-M), in the state semi-finals on Friday, Nov. 8.

It was the fourth meeting between the two teams this season and unfortunately for the Tigers, the fourth time ended the same way as the first three as the W-E-M Buccaneers earned the win, this time via a three-game sweep.

Based on her team's previous matches versus W-E-M, Medford Head Coach Missy Underdahl knew her team would have to get off to a strong start and keep it up throughout the match.

"We knew we had to stay aggressive, keep swinging, and let our cover be there if they did block us. I felt like we did a good job of that most of the game, but then at points we'd get really timid and we weren't attacking as hard as we could have. Then, it just kind of gets to be a mental game and it just kind of breaks you down a little bit," she said.

Due to those breakdowns and the Buccaneers surging offense, W-E-M won the first set 25-21.

She said the Buccaneers have a knack of finding and exploiting the Tigers' weakness.

"W-E-M has been our bugaboo probably the last two years. We start out very confident and then for some reason they just do a good job of kind of slowly breaking us down and finding maybe it's a hole in our defense or maybe one of our weaker serve receivers and they attack her. As the game progresses, it seems to change our confidence and we break down contin-



STAFF PHOTO BY ALEX NUEHRING

Medford's Kinsey Cronin, left center, and Morgan Langeslag, center, celebrate after winning their first point in set one against Waterville-Elysian-Morristown in the state semi-finals. Unfortunately for the Tigers, the W-E-M Buccaneers won each of the first three sets to advance to state championship game.

"I just really hope that they can walk away from here realizing the impact that they have made on Medford."

Missy Underdahl
Medford Volleyball Coach

ually and we can't seem to get past that," Underdahl said. "We start fresh every set and then there's one little thing that might go wrong and then it kind of just deflates from there."

It was more of the same in the second set as the Buccaneers won 25-20 to take a commanding two set lead.

W-E-M got off to a hot start in the third set as they quickly built a 9-2 lead with Medford's two points coming on two net errors by the Buccaneers.

The Tigers rallied to tie the set at 19-19, but after that it was all W-E-M as they went on to win the third and final set 25-20.

Senior Emma Kniefel said the Tigers' defense didn't do a good enough job limiting W-E-M's runs.

"Honestly, we just let them go on too many runs. The runs were too long and at that point you have to keep coming back it's hard to get that lead back," she said.

Senior Kiley Nihart said the Buccaneers' offense also deserves credit for its runs.

"They always had one good server in each set of

the game that got us out of rhythm, pulled us out of system which makes it hard to come back from that," she said.

Despite losing in the semi-finals, Underdahl hopes her players understand how far they've come.

"It's the first time ever in Medford history that a girls' team has ever made it to state, let alone to have a repeat year even with a different team, some girls are new, some girls are playing different positions but for the majority of the part they've all been around the team," she said. "I just really hope that they can walk away from here realizing the impact that they have made on Medford. Win or lose, that community really doesn't care how the outcome of the season or state went, they're just so dang proud of these girls and these girls should be so dang proud of everything they've accomplished in their career here at Medford volleyball. These girls have been just a blessing to be a part of their lives."

Kniefel led Medford with 13 kills and 22 serve

receives with no errors. Junior Kinsey Cronin collected seven kills and senior Alyvia Johnson had six kills. Senior setter Morgan Langeslag recorded 29 assists and 11 digs. Nihart registered 21 digs and an ace serve.

The Tigers' seniors ended their high school careers on a high note by sweeping the Fosston Greyhounds in the third-place game.

Medford won both of the first two sets by the same score, 25-16. The Tigers then won the third and final set 25-17 to earn third place and improve their record to 26-9.

Kniefel again led the way, this time she collected 15 kills, nine digs, and two ace serves. Cronin recorded 17 kills, Johnson tallied eight kills, and Clara Kniefel registered six kills. Langeslag hit six kills, 45 assists, and nine digs. Nihart led the team in digs with 11.

After finishing runner-up last year, the Tigers bring a trophy and individual medals back to Medford for the second straight year.



STAFF PHOTO BY ALEX NUEHRING

Tigers' setter Morgan Langeslag sets the ball up for teammate Clara Kniefel, left.



STAFF PHOTO BY ALEX NUEHRING

Medford outside hitter Emma Kniefel goes up to hit the ball over two W-E-M blockers.



STAFF PHOTO BY ALEX NUEHRING

Tigers' outside hitter Alyvia Johnson blocks a hit in the first set of Medford's three-set loss to Waterville-Elysian-Morristown.

SILENCING ACT



Up 7-0 at halftime, St. Thomas Academy controlled the ball for most of the second half thanks to its running game. Wiese, center, tried to contain the Cadets' ball carrier while Matt Seykora, left, Carter DeBus, right center, and Zach Stransky, far right, came up in run support.



STAFF PHOTO BY ALEX NUEHRING
It was that kind of day for the Owatonna Huskies as the ball and the game was just out of reach. The Huskies were held back by missing two field goals, not scoring a touchdown from the seven-yard line in the fourth quarter, and being victimized by a blocked punt during its 21-0 loss to St. Thomas Academy on Saturday, Nov. 9.

Cadets end Huskies repeat title hopes, 29-game winning streak

BY ALEX NUEHRING
SPORTS EDITOR

All good things must come to an end, and after winning their last 29 games the Owatonna Huskies run at becoming state champions for a third straight year came to an end at the hands of the St. Thomas Academy Cadets. The Cadets used a stingy defense, a momentum-shifting special teams play, and a perseverant offense to win 21-0 in the state quarterfinals on Saturday, Nov. 9 in Woodbury.

Saturday's state quarterfinal game between the two schools was a rematch, of sorts, from last year's Prep Bowl showdown, which the Huskies came out on top 14-3.

Owatonna Head Coach Jeff Williams said his defense was able to stifle the Cadets until late in the second quarter.

"They didn't do anything in the first half until we gave them the short field and that was obviously very unfortunate," he said.

The short field was caused by a blocked punt that the Cadets recovered at the Huskies' seven-yard line. St. Thomas scored its first touchdown on a three-yard run three plays later.

On the blocked punt, Williams said, "There was penetration where there ought not have been and that happens every once in a while."

However, that hadn't happened to Owatonna in quite a while as Williams

said the last time the Huskies had a punt blocked was back in 2009.

"Part of the deal too is we don't punt very often. The last two weeks now you start to see tougher competition and you got to punt more frequently," he said.

After both teams punted frequently in the first half, the Cadets held a 7-0 lead at halftime.

Williams hoped that the Huskies' defense would keep the score that way and give their offense an opportunity to tie the game.

"I wanted the opportunity to have the ball with a chance to win, obviously late in the fourth quarter that just wasn't there for us," he said.

Having a chance to win in the fourth quarter wasn't there because St. Thomas' offense was able to move the ball better than they had in the first half.

"You have to at least take it into consideration the fact that they had the ball for nine minutes of the third quarter. Obviously, a couple penalties helped extend it, but we couldn't get off the field," Williams said. "Maybe they [Owatonna's defense] were a little run down, a little bit tired. We're asking a few of those defensive linemen/offensive linemen to go both ways and they definitely started to take over the line of scrimmage at that point."

The Cadets exploited their advantage at the line of scrimmage by scoring

two rushing touchdowns in the second half.

Meanwhile, the Huskies' offense was held in check by St. Thomas' defense.

"Their defensive line was very tough, very aggressive. Their linebackers were very tough and in order for us to get holes we've got to be able to get two hats on a defensive lineman and then come off to a linebacker late. Their defensive line was so aggressive we weren't able to come off on their linebackers very frequently. Their linebackers were good," he said.

He thinks the Cadets' quality front seven was one of the reasons they were

able to consistently harass Owatonna quarterback Brayden Truelson in the second half.

However, Williams mentioned that a couple other reasons were it was getting late in the game and with the Huskies trailing the Cadets knew a pass was coming.

"I think our kids started to get a little bit tired. We were having to pass more frequently and so they're able to pin their ears back and come after us. We didn't have too many other options at that point and they can come after you if you don't have a real threat to run it," he said.

Despite losing, he was proud of the contributions from his team, especially the seniors.

"A lot of those guys played a role in the 2017 championship. Obviously, a lot of returning starters from the 2018 team so I think they had high expectations," he said.

Even though they fell short of their expectations, Williams said the Huskies can still hold their heads high.

"That was a very good St. Thomas team. We consider ourselves one of the best teams in the state. I think we can still hang our hat on that, we just weren't as good as St. Thomas today," he said. "I don't think that's anything to apologize for. They were very, very good today."

This year marked Owatonna's ninth state tournament trip with three titles, including championships in the past two seasons.

GAME SUMMARY

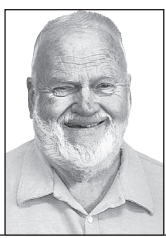
Cadets 21, Huskies 0

Owatonna	0	0	0	0-0
St. Thomas	0	7	7	7-21



Huskies' returner Payton Beyer eludes a St. Thomas Academy tackler during the first half.

STAFF PHOTO BY ALEX NUEHRING



Outside the Lines

LEMAR NELSON

For the second year in a row the Awesome Blossom football team advances to the state semi-finals at U.S. Bank Stadium, and we can hope that this is the year that the Blossoms can break through and pick up that vital win that sends them to the finals.

I thought that Springfield would be tough, but a fast start for another straight game got them off on the right foot. The pass to Gabe Hagen earned the first touchdown, and they added two more before the end of the quarter. Nobody could ask for more than that.

One of the Tiger scores featured a long pass and run, but the last two could somewhat be attributed to a softer defense. Now they have reached the big part of the initial goal of the season. Wins in the semi-finals and finals would complete their goals and make it the most memorable football season in school history. The overall and equal strength on offense and defense can carry them through. Good luck!

WHAT CAN ONE ADD?

Besides a section championship, the victory over Goodhue marked the second time this season that the Blossoms prevailed over the always-tough Wildcat team. In the last half dozen years, the two teams have almost taken turns defeating each other for the section title, and their rivalry has been one of intensity and respect-

fulness. A victory over Springfield-Comfrey will advance the team to U.S. Bank Stadium and would be the second year in a row that the team has been undefeated all the way to the state playoff semi-final contest without a loss.

SOUND OF MUSIC

The fourth presentation of the all-school musical entertained large audiences again over the weekend, and some very good high school talent performed admirably. Each time that very favorable musical has been on the BPHS schedule, the play has provided a unique little touch, and this year I think the addition of the large orchestra that provided the background music made a big difference.

Congratulations are in order for Amelia Harthan and directors Tammy Johnson and Kari Bottin

for accomplishing that difficult task. The cast and crews did a great job, as usual, but there is no doubt that tuneful background music makes a difference kudos to everyone for making the hills come alive again with the sounds of music.

THANKS TO VETS

Although it has gone by different names over the years, it is pretty well accepted that the special day to honor veterans, both living and dead be recognized as Veterans Day. Blooming Prairie always does a great job in honoring veterans, and this year was no exception. Especially moving this year was the dedication ceremony of the Veterans' Memorial.

A number of people worked tirelessly to get that memorial planned and erected, and it provides a moving and fitting monu-

ment to the Blooming Prairie community. The morning coffee, and the dinner and program Monday evening all came together to make this Veterans' Day a memorable experience for that assemblage. Well done to all involved.

THIS AND THAT

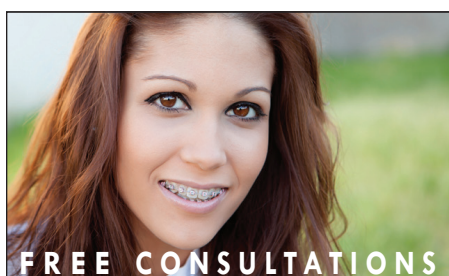
This Thursday brings us another installment of Turkey bingo. Just as Ham Bingo has been so popular in December, so Turkey Bingo has filed that niche. It will be held at the Pizza cellar at 7 p.m. with 25 games of bingo on the docket. Better get there early for a seat at the table.

I think the older one gets, the more that distant memories pop into our heads unannounced. Last week, I wrote about November really being a month of transition, and I still have random thoughts running in and out of my

brain at odd moments. Thanksgiving is still almost two weeks away, and I will hold those thoughts for a while, but they are circulating for sure.

Those of us of a certain age still remember the Armistice Day blizzard that caught literally hundreds off guard, most of them hunters, and killed over a hundred people. As I mentioned last week, November is one of those months in which a lot of things can happen that change our outlook of the days ahead.

Let's hope we can bring a huge crowd to the semi-finals this week, and the team can play its usual good game with very few mistakes. That would bode well for the team and the multitude of fans that hopefully will follow them to U.S. Bank Stadium. Whatever happens, we'll talk again.



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*Tie-Breaker Score _____ *

7. Minnesota at Iowa*

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- **How to win:** Pick the team you think will win each game listed in the below advertisements. Write the team's name in the blank with corresponding number. Cut out and send or drop off at Steele County Times, P.O. Box 247, Blooming Prairie, MN 55917 or Dodge County Independent, 121 W. Main St., Kasson, MN 55944. You may enter in person, mail or e-mail to bptimes@frontiernet.net or dcj@kmtel.com. Must be returned by 5 p.m. on Tuesday prior to games. (Note: the selected games are for the following week, not the current week.)
- **Tie-Breaker:** You must enter a score in the Tie-Breaker game or you will be disqualified.
- **Prizes:** We will award a gift card to local restaurant or grocery store to the person correctly predicting the most winners from the games listed. There will be a grand prize awarded to the person who picks the most correct games throughout the entire 12 weeks. All decisions by judges are final.
- **Eligibility:** Open to anyone age 14 or older, excluding staff of newspapers.



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