

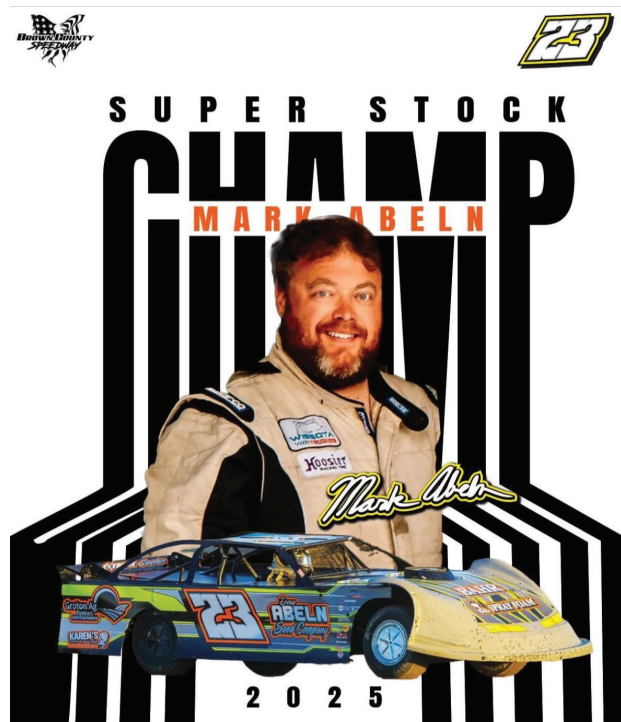


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The Groton Independent

Vol. 142 No. 51 ♦ Groton, SD ♦ Wednesday, Sept. 10, 2025 ♦ Established in 1889

Abeln Captures Brown County Speedway Super Stock Points Championship



Mark Abeln wins the Super Stock division at Brown County Speedway.

Years in the Making

Abeln's journey to the top wasn't a short one. He's been racing on and off for roughly two decades, first getting behind the wheel in 2001 after being introduced to the sport by his father, Doug Abeln.

"I watched some friends race, and then my dad asked if I wanted to try it," Abeln recalled. "He got me started, and after that, it was an addiction."

Abeln began his career in a Pure Stock — essentially a street car outfitted with a roll cage. After a year, he moved up to the Super Stock class, where he has stayed ever since. Along the way, he also tried his hand at racing modifieds and late models.

"Late models were fun, but really expensive," he said. "The Super Stocks are more relaxed. You can be competitive but also just go out there and have fun."

The Track and the Team



Kelly, Kaden and Mark Abeln.

Other key members of Abeln's crew include Brandon Smith, Dan Nelson, Marshall McConnell, and Abeln's son Kaden, who also races in the same class.

"There's nothing like getting behind the wheel," Abeln said. "Any stress from the week disappears because you have to focus on the race and the safety of others. It's a huge stress reliever."

A Family Tradition

Now that Abeln has secured his first championship, he's considering stepping back to support Kaden's racing career.

"My son is doing really well," Abeln said. "It would be pretty cool to focus on helping him chase a title next."



Kaden's vehicle is the 23 Jr on the left and Mark's vehicle is the 23 on the right.

ABERDEEN — For Groton-area driver Mark Abeln, Friday nights at the Brown County Speedway are more than just racing — they're a release. This season, that passion paid off as Abeln captured the Super Stock points championship, edging out a strong field of competitors.

Abeln, who races under the WISSOTA Super Stock classification, wrapped up the title in dramatic fashion, battling fellow driver Austin Arbogast right down to the final race of the season.

"We went into the last night just nine points apart," Abeln said. "That's nothing. It can change in one lap depending on where you finish."

When the green flag dropped, Abeln's car was dialed in. He eventually passed Arbogast, who later had to exit the race due to a flat tire. By the end of the night, Abeln had stretched his lead to 18 points, securing the championship he'd been chasing for years.

"The stars finally aligned," Abeln said with a smile. "We've been trying forever to win this, and it finally happened."



Mark and Kaden

While Abeln occasionally travels to Wattertown, Miller, or even Madison, the Brown County Speedway remains his home track. This season saw 31 different Super Stock drivers compete, with 16 to 20 showing up on a typical Friday night.

Behind every successful driver is a team. For Abeln, that includes his wife, Kelly, who he credits as the cornerstone of his racing life.

"If it wasn't for her, we wouldn't be doing this," he said. "She lets me follow this passion."

Kaden races the No. 23 Jr car, continuing the family tradition at Brown County Speedway. As for Mark's plans?

"We might just flip a coin," he laughed. "Either I'll be out there again, or I'll be the guy in the pits making sure Kaden's ready to go."

Regardless of what the future holds, this season will be one to remember for Abeln and his team — a season where hard work, family support, and dedication led to a long-awaited championship.

Rapid City, SD, Native Graduates from the U.S. Naval Academy



Grace Blote receiving diploma from Vice President JD Vance.

by Dorene Nelson

Grace Blote, Rapid City, SD, successfully completed four years of challenging academic, physical, and professional military training, graduating from the U.S. Naval Academy with a Bachelor of Science degree in Data Science.

Blote, the daughter of Steve and LaRae Blote, and the granddaughter of Shirley and the late Dennis K. Larson, Groton, graduated from St. Thomas More High School, Rapid City in 2021.

Grace is now attending nuclear power school in Charleston, S.C. and will be serving in the U.S. Navy for a minimum of five years.

Founded in 1845, the U. S. Naval Academy is a prestigious four-year service academy that prepares midshipmen morally, mentally, and physically to be professional officers in the naval service. More than 4,400 men and women representing every state in the U.S. and several foreign countries make up the student body, known as the Brigade of Midshipmen.

Each year approximately 1200 students are admitted to the Naval Academy's incoming class. U.S. News and World Reports has recognized the Naval Academy as the #1 public school, #4 engineering program, and #6 liberal arts college.

Midshipmen learn from military and civilian instructors and participate in intercollegiate varsity sports and extracurricular activities. They also study subjects such as leadership, ethics, small arms, drill, seamanship and navigation, tactics, naval engineering and weapons, and military law.

Upon graduation, midshipmen earn a Bachelor of Science degree in a choice of twenty-six different subject majors and go on to serve at least five years of exciting and rewarding service as commissioned officers in the U.S. Navy or U.S. Marine Corps.



Graduation photo with father Steve, graduate Grace, sister Emily, and mother LaRae.

The academy's alumni include one president, 29 members of Congress, five governors, 73 Medal of Honor recipients, two Nobel Prize winners, 55 astronauts, and 4000 admirals and generals.

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Groton Soccer Teams Sweep West Central Behind Strong Defensive Efforts

The Groton Area Tigers soccer teams delivered a clean sweep at home on Saturday, with both the boys and girls squads earning hard-fought victories over West Central.

Girls Game: Gilbert’s Goal Lifts Tigers to Victory

The Groton girls kicked off the afternoon with a gritty 1-0 win, improving their record to 5-2 on the season. It was a crucial victory as Groton entered the game ranked third in the state power ratings, while West Central was just behind them in fourth.

The game’s lone goal came with 16:05 left in the first half when Carly Gilbert broke free and buried a shot past the West Central goalkeeper. Head Coach Matt Baumgartner said the scoring play was the result of sustained offensive pressure rather than a single quick strike.

“That was one of those possessions where we just kept the ball in our attacking mode for several minutes,” Baumgartner explained. “As players move and occupy different spaces, opportunities open up, and Carly made a great shot when the chance came.”

Baumgartner noted that the game was heavily defensive, with West Central applying pressure throughout, especially late in the match.

“I’d say it was an evenly matched game,” he said. “They’ve got quality pieces, good speed, and playmakers, just like we do. With it being Labor Day week, homecoming, and a long road trip earlier, our girls had a lot going on. For them to come out on a Saturday and bring the energy like they did was huge.”

The Tigers’ defense held firm in the second half, staying composed and forcing West Central to make the mistakes. Groton’s composure and discipline sealed the shutout.

Looking ahead, Groton will travel to Vermilion next Saturday. Baumgartner stressed the importance of maintaining focus.

“Vermilion has been giving up quite a few goals this year, but we can’t play down to our opponent,” he said. “At this point in the season, we need to play sharp, quality soccer no matter who we’re up against.”

Sydney Locke keeps the ball away from West Central’s Bailey Stallman.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)

Boys Game: Corner Kick Execution Secures Win

In the second game of the day, the Groton boys used set pieces to their advantage, defeating West Central 2-1 in a tightly contested match. The win improved Groton’s record to 5-1-1, tying them with Freeman Academy for second place in the state rankings. West Central dropped to 1-4-1, sitting eighth in the standings.

Both Groton goals came off corner kicks — something Head Coach Ryan Olson said has been a point of strength for his team.

“Last year, a lot of our scoring came off corner kicks, and we’ve continued to make that a focus,” Olson said. “We make sure everyone is covering their areas, and it’s paying off.”

The first goal came with 31:46 left in the first half when Axel Abeln battled through heavy traffic in front of the goal and forced the ball across the line after a scramble.

Groton struck again with 27:27 remaining in the game, this time with Ethan Kroll finishing on a perfect assist from Ryder Schwan.

West Central made things interesting late, capitalizing on a missed penalty kick rebound with 11:54 left, as Max Poss buried the follow-up shot to cut the lead in half. But Groton’s defense, anchored by their 6-foot-7 goalkeeper, Gage Sippel, held strong to secure the win.

Karson Zak uses quick footwork to keep control of the ball.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Karson Zak uses quick footwork to keep control of the ball. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

Olson credited his seniors for their leadership and his speedy underclassmen for providing an extra edge.

“Our seniors are doing a great job leading and being vocal on the field,” he said. “And that sophomore class — they’ve got a ton of speed. When we get them the ball with good touches, they can make things happen.”

What’s Next

The Groton boys faced a tough test Tuesday when they traveled to take on undefeated James Valley Christian.

“James Valley is number one for a reason,” Olson said. “We’ve got two tough games coming up this week with them and then Vermilion on Saturday. We just can’t lose focus.”

On Saturday, both the boys and girls will head to Vermilion, where the boys will face a 3-2 squad, while the girls will take on a team with a 1-3 record.

— King Crossword —
Answers

Solution time: 22 mins.

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Winner Pulls Away Late to Defeat Groton in Homecoming Thriller



Tristin McGannon.
(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Karson Zak doing the kickoff flanked by Braeden Fliehs, Julian Rodriguez, Asher Johnson, TC Schuster and Lincoln Krause. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

territory, the Warriors went for it, but Groton swarmed the ball carrier who botched the punt attempt for a turnover on downs at the Winner seven-yard line. Moments later, facing a fourth-and-two, Ryder Johnson caught a two-yard touchdown pass from Asher Johnson. Zak’s kick made it 22-14 Groton, electrifying the home crowd.

Winner Responds and Pulls Away

Winner answered quickly, showing their championship pedigree. Starting at their own 31-yard line, they powered through the Groton defense with five first downs, culminating in Olson’s 25-yard touchdown run. Olson added the two-point conversion to tie the game at 22-22 with 2:12 remaining in the third quarter.

Groton’s next possession ended in a costly interception. Although Winner’s return for 50 yards was negated by a penalty, the Warriors still took over at the Groton 42-yard line as the third quarter ended.

To open the fourth quarter, Winner capitalized on its field position. Carter McKenzie scored on a four-yard run, and Olson caught a pass from Quincy Phillips for the PAT, putting Winner back in front 30-22 with 10:05 remaining.

Groton’s offense couldn’t sustain a drive on its next possession and was forced to punt. Winner then delivered the final blow — a clock-chewing drive capped by Olson’s six-yard touchdown run with just 40 seconds left. The PAT pass was no good, but the Warriors had sealed a 36-22 victory.

Coach Wanner’s Reflections

After the game, Groton head coach Shaun Wanner praised his young team for battling one of the state’s top programs. “We went toe-to-toe with one of the perennial powerhouses in the state,” Wanner said. “They don’t do anything fancy — they just keep coming at you. I think they only threw three passes all night. We just got worn down late in the third quarter and into the fourth.”

Wanner emphasized that playing Winner was about growth, not just the scoreboard. “This is why we wanted this game,” he said. “We wanted to get our eighth game in and face a tough opponent. We got better tonight. We were a lot better than we were last week, and that’s the goal — to keep improving as the season goes on.”

With many young and inexperienced players stepping into key roles, Wanner has preached patience. “When you graduate your entire backfield, your quarterback, and your running backs, it takes time to develop,” he said. “By the time we get into that fourth, fifth, and sixth game, I think we’ll be okay.”

Looking ahead to next week’s game against Milbank, Wanner kept the focus simple. “It still comes down to making a few tackles and making some blocks,” he said. “If we keep improving like we did this week, good things will happen.”

Game Stats

Groton Tigers (1-2)

First Downs: 5
Rushing (12 carries, 79 yards)
Ryder Johnson – 3 carries, 55 yards
Ryder Shelley – 4 carries, 18 yards
Asher Johnson – 2 carries, 9 yards
Keegan Tracy – 3 carries, -3 yards
Passing: Asher Johnson – 9 of 12, 114 yards, 3 TD, 1 INT
Keegan Tracy – 5 catches, 106 yards, 2 TD
Ryder Johnson – 4 catches, 8 yards, 1 TD
Penalties: 3 for 20 yards
Defensive Leaders:
Asher Johnson – 12 tackles
Tucker Hardy – 12 tackles

Ben Hoeft – 11 tackles
Ryder Johnson – 10 tackles
Logan Warrington – 9 tackles
Karter Moody – 8 tackles
Winner Warriors (2-1)
First Downs: 24
Rushing (64 carries, 297 yards)
Zach Olson – 20 carries, 157 yards
Camdyn Anderson – 14 carries, 57 yards
Carter McKenzie – 8 carries, 48 yards
Riker Oriel – 18 carries, 41 yards
Seth Heath – 3 carries, 19 yards
Tayden Pechota – 1 carry, -25 yards
Passing: Quincy Phillips – 1 of 3, 17 yards
Zach Olson – 1 catch, 17 yards
Fumbles: 5 (none lost)

Penalties: 6 for 45 yards
Defensive Leaders:
Seth Heath – 5 tackles
Camdyn Anderson – 4 tackles
Riker Oriel – 4 tackles

Looking Ahead

Groton now sits at 1-2 on the season and will host Milbank next week. Winner improves to 2-1 and will travel to face Elk Point-Jefferson.

Coach Wanner summed up the night by praising his players:

“Our kids played hard tonight, and that’s all we expect,” he said. “We’ll keep working to get better each week and see where that takes us by playoff time.”



Soldier Field has been a house of heartbreak for the Minnesota Vikings over the years, but on Monday Night Football, J.J. McCarthy flipped the script. The second-year quarterback led three straight fourth-quarter touchdown drives to erase a double-digit deficit and deliver a 27-24 comeback win against the rival Chicago Bears. The Vikings opened the game with a quick three-and-out, while Chicago marched 61 yards on a 10-play touchdown drive. Minnesota’s next possession ended in another punt, though the defense held firm and forced a Bears punt to close the quarter. The Vikings finally moved the ball on their first drive of the second quarter, thanks in large part to a 42-yard pass interference call on former Viking Nahshon Wright. The drive stalled inside the red zone, but Will Reichard’s field goal cut the deficit to 7-3. The next four drives produced little (two punts apiece) before Chicago tacked on a field goal with 24 seconds left in the half. The Vikings weren’t interested in kneeling out the clock and heading into halftime, and McCarthy and Jalen Nailor connected for 28 yards to set up Reichard’s 59-yard kick, a career best, cutting Chicago’s lead to just four. The Vikings opened the second half with a defensive stop, but momentum swung back quickly. McCarthy’s first career touchdown pass went the wrong way, as Nahshon Wright jumped a throw and returned it 74 yards for a Bears touchdown. Minnesota’s offense sputtered again, punting after losing 10 yards, and the third quarter ended with the Vikings still searching for answers. A missed 50-yard field goal by Chicago gave Minnesota life early in the fourth, and McCarthy made the most of it. He marched the Vikings 60 yards in six plays, capping it with a touchdown strike to Justin Jefferson. The two-point attempt failed, but the deficit was down to five. After another Bears punt, McCarthy wasted no time, hitting Aaron Jones for a 27-yard touchdown to give Minnesota its first lead of the night. A successful two-point conversion stretched it to 20-17. The defense forced yet another punt, and McCarthy extended the lead himself with a 14-yard scramble into the end zone. Suddenly, the Vikings led 27-17 with under five minutes left. Penalties on three straight plays, however, handed the Bears new life, and Chicago cut the lead to three with a quick touchdown drive. The Vikings ran three times and punted, leaving the Bears nine seconds. Their desperation hook-and-ladder attempt ended in a fumble recovery by Minnesota, sealing the win.

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21 N Main, Groton 605/397-NEWS (6397)
Paul Irvin Kosel, Publisher paperpaul@grotonsd.net ~ 605-397-7460
Tina Kosel, Office Manager office@grotonsd.net ~ 605-397-7285
Notices: legals@grotonsd.net
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McCarthy finished 13 of 20 for 168 total yards with three total touchdowns. Jordan Mason paced the backfield with 68 yards on 15 carries, while Jefferson and Jones each had 44 receiving yards and a touchdown. On defense, newcomer Javon Hargrave recorded both of Minnesota’s sacks, and Andrew Van Ginkel added a tackle for loss and two pass breakups. The obvious player of the game was McCarthy. Expectations were high for the young quarterback, and after a shaky start, he delivered in the fourth quarter with three straight touchdown drives. He became just the second quarterback in Vikings history to throw multiple touchdown passes in his debut, joining Fran Tarkenton in 1961 (also against the Bears). He also became the first quarterback since Steve Young in 1985 to erase a double-digit fourth-quarter deficit and win his NFL debut. Next up, the Vikings return home for another prime-time test as they host the Atlanta Falcons on Sunday Night Football.

Groton Area facilities planning moves forward with school board approval

By Elizabeth Varin

The Groton Area School Board took its first official steps toward a long-term facilities plan Monday night. The board approved a request for proposal for a facilities master plan of the district’s middle/high school building at 502 North Second Street. The goal, according to the request document, is to examine the use and condition of the facility and provide actionable recommendations for future improvement. The scope of work for the facilities master plan includes on-site inspections, analysis of the building systems (HVAC, roofing, electrical, plumbing and more), an educational adequacy review, development of improvement options and cost estimates, and identification of possible funding mechanisms. Proposals must be submitted by October 7, with an estimated final presentation taking place in March 2026. Superintendent Joe Schwan also updated the board on the district’s buildings, grounds and transportation committee, which has started analyzing a preliminary list of needed improvements. The work marks the beginning of efforts to create a ranked capital improvement plan, one of the board’s established goals. The board also heard updates on the K-12 music and health/physical education programs. Josh Friez, new 5-12 instrumental music teacher, told the board that it’s hard to follow anyone who has been leading the instrumental music program for a long time, but “I’m trying to retain the students I have and grow it from there.” Currently, there are 35 in the high school band and 38 in the middle school band, he said. The number of elementary students involved in band are not finalized. Friez’s goal is to have 50 students in each band, as well as teaching kids to love music and grow as individuals. A new opportunity for this school year is an expansion of drum line with a bucket drumming ensemble. Friez also told the board about an investment opportunity and longer-term goal: new marching band uniforms.

The current uniforms are more than 20 years old and some pieces are in pretty rough shape, he said. However, with an initial quote for 75 uniforms totaling more than \$19,000, it is a long-term goal, sometime they can work towards. Landon Brown, K-12 vocal music teacher, reported changes for the upcoming school year. A big change for the 2025-2026 school year is shifting away from a show choir team to instead staging a musical, scheduled to take place in March. The musical, which will be open to sixth through 12th grade students, will be “Annie.” Auditions will take place at the end of the fall semester. Physical education instructors also updated the board about the health and physical education program. Lynette Grieve, physical education teacher, told the board about skills she works on with the junior kindergarten, kindergarten, first and second grade students, which includes balance, exercise, flexibility, agility, muscle strength, stretching, health and physical fitness. Grieve works with classes ranging in size from 8 (junior kindergarten) to 26 (both second grade classes). Kyle Gerlach, K-12 physical education/health teacher, also updated the board on class sizes he sees – between 20-24 students in elementary classes and from 20-26 students in middle school/high school classes. Gerlach sees a few areas of concern, including a lack of space at the elementary school, limiting what he can do with those classes. Classes at the middle/high school need updated textbooks to address vaping, cyber bullying, etc. However, that curriculum is scheduled to be updated soon.

- District administrators reported the most recent enrollment numbers for the district. In total, there were 568 students enrolled in the district as of Monday morning. That includes 266 at the elementary school, 139 at the middle school and 163 at the high school.

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Groton Area Netters Top Sisseton, Moves to 3-0

The Groton Area Tigers volleyball team continued its strong start to the 2025 season with a 3-0 Northeast Conference victory over the Sisseton Redmen Thursday night.

Groton came out dominant in the opening set, surging to a 25-12 win behind sharp serving and aggressive net play. The Tigers carried that momentum into the second set, again taking control early and never letting up in a 25-15 victory to take a commanding 2-0 lead.

Head Coach Chelsea Hanson was pleased with how her team began the match, especially considering the week's distractions.

"It was a good win," Hanson said. "An-



Tevan Hanson
(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Jerica Locke
(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Jaedyn Penning
(Photo by Paul Kosel)

other conference win, so we're always happy with that. Coming out 2-0 during homecoming week is never anything I'm going to complain about."

Back-and-Forth Third Set

The third set turned into a battle, with Sisseton refusing to go quietly. The set featured nine ties and six lead changes, the last tie coming at 19-all. From there, Groton dug deep, rattling off four straight points to seize a 24-19 lead before closing out the match with a 25-21 win.

While the Tigers ultimately prevailed, Hanson admitted the team's focus wavered in the third set. "It's easy to lose focus," she explained. "Through the first two sets, they didn't have very many kills — maybe five or six total. We had complete control of the game. But when you're playing a team where it doesn't matter if you make mistakes, sometimes you get comfortable, and that's something we want to avoid. Against good teams, you'll lose those games. Even though it's a win, we definitely need to clean up our side of the court."

Key Performances

Groton's attack was well-balanced despite missing leading scorer Chesney Weber, who was out sick. "We were without Chesney tonight, and she's our leading point scorer," Hanson said. "To have someone step in like Talli did and not miss a beat was huge. It really shows our depth. We played seven or eight of the 11 players on our bench tonight, and we didn't skip a beat."

Varsity Leaders:

Tevan Hanson — 9 kills, 20-26 attacking
Jaedyn Penning — 8 kills, 4 ace serves, 19-20 attacking, 10 digs, 1 assisted block
Rylee Dunker — 7 kills, 3 ace serves, 12-17 attacking, 1 block
McKenna Tietz — 6 ace serves, 19-20 serving
Taryn Traphagen — 5 kills
Makenna Krause — 2 ace serves, 6 digs
Jerica Locke — 1 ace serve, 10 digs
Talli Wright — 29 assists, 1 kill

Sisseton Leaders:

Saylor Langager — 5 kills
Elliot Hortness — 4 kills, 1 block, 1 ace serve
Gabby Hanson — 2 kills
Bella Donnell, Marissa Lewis, Colie Schultz — 1 kill each
Izzy Metz — 1 ace serve

Hanson praised her team's versatility and depth, emphasizing how valuable it is as the season progresses.

"There are going to be times when a player's number is called, and other times where they don't play," Hanson said. "I'm so impressed by their ability to adapt to all the different lineups I throw at them. Getting a win without Chesney should boost everyone's confidence."

Program-Wide Sweep

Groton's success wasn't limited to the varsity level. The junior varsity and C-teams also won their matches, giving the Tigers a clean sweep for the night.

Junior Varsity: Groton won 25-8, 25-15.
McKenna Tietz — 1 ace serve
Kinsley Rowen — 2 kills
Tevan Hanson — 6 ace serves
Makenna Krause — 4 kills, 4 ace serves
Abby Fjeldheim — 4 kills
Emerlee Jones — 3 kills, 2 ace serves
Elizabeth Cole — 5 kills
Libby Althoff — 2 kills, 6 ace serves
C-Team: Groton won 25-15, 25-21.
Arianna Dinger — 2 ace serves
Kinsley Rowen — 3 kills, 3 ace serves
Audrey Davis — 3 kills
Ryelle Gilbert — 1 ace serve
Rylan Eckern — 2 kills, 1 ace serve
Abby Fjeldheim — 5 kills, 3 ace serves
Addison Hoeft — 6 kills

On the Road Ahead

The Tigers are now 3-0 to start the season, something Hanson says hasn't happened in years.

"We haven't been 3-0 coming out of the gate for a long time," she said. "It's exciting for the girls."

Groton now hits the road for much of September, beginning with a trip to Webster on Tuesday followed by Aberdeen Roncalli on Thursday.

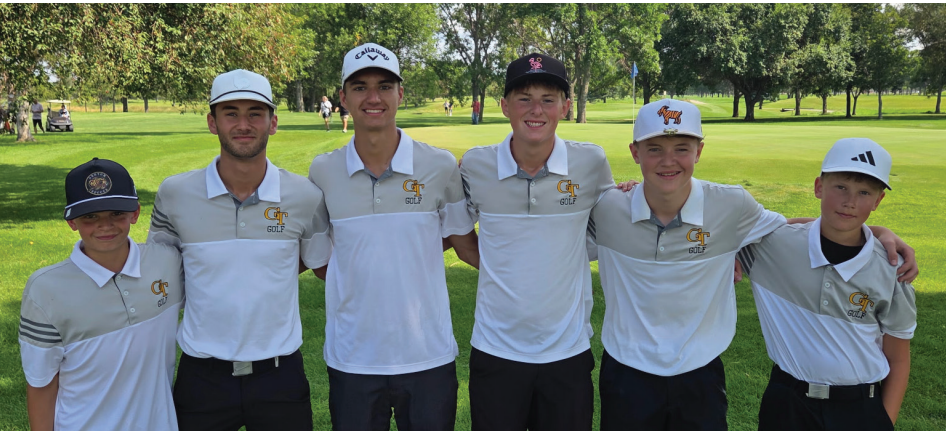
"We had to schedule homecoming early because we're on the road almost the entire month of September," Hanson said. "We had a couple of home games in August and then tonight, but we won't be back home much until October."

This complete performance — highlighted by sharp serving, balanced attacking, and depth across all levels — sets Groton up well for the challenges ahead.

Groton Area golfers place fifth in a competitive nine team tournament

Groton Area golfers took part in the Hub City Invitational in Aberdeen. Jace Johnson shot n 80 to place 22nd while Jarrett Erdmann placed 31st with an 86, Hayden Harder was 42nd with a 97, Jayden Schwan was 46th with a 101, Liam Johnson was 47th with a 104 and Graham Rose was 56th with a 117.

Watertown won the team title with a score of 299 followed by Brookings with 300, Aberdeen Roncalli 304, Aberdeen Central 308, Pierre 325, Groton Area 364, Sisseton 374, Milbank 387, Redfield 392 and Huron 427.



Pictured left to right are Haden Harder, Jarrett Erdmann, Jayden Schwan, Jace Johnson, Liam Johnson, and Graham Rose.
(Courtesy Photo)

Yardage	345	500	489	320	180	389	400	177	366	3166	360	345	153	335	375	164	463	387	331	2913	6079
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Out	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	In	Total
Par	4	5	5	4	3	4	4	3	4	36	4	4	3	4	4	3	5	4	4	35	71
22. Jace Johnson	5	5	5	4	3	5	5	3	3	38	5	4	4	8	4	4	4	4	5	42	80
31. Jarrett Erdmann	4	5	8	5	3	6	3	4	4	42	4	5	4	6	5	3	7	5	5	44	86
42. Haden Harder	6	5	4	6	3	6	6	5	3	44	5	5	2	5	8	4	7	7	10	53	97
46. Jayden Schwan	5	7	6	7	4	5	5	3	6	48	6	9	4	5	5	5	6	4	9	53	101
47. Liam Johnson	4	5	7	7	3	8	6	6	7	53	5	7	5	5	7	4	8	6	4	51	104
56. Graham Rose	5	6	8	7	5	8	6	5	7	57	6	6	5	6	7	8	8	7	7	60	117



City of Columbia Council Meeting – September 8, 2025
CALL MEETING TO ORDER – 7:00 p.m.
ROLL CALL –Dana Mohr, Cara Dennert, Scott Meints, Sam Hoppock, Trevor Meints
Community: Lacey & Ben Jeffrey, Julie & Jeff Voeller, Lisa Mohr, Pam Blair, Angela & Judy Grieb, Andrew Murray
Mayor Dana Mohr called the meeting to order. Dana called for a motion to approve the agenda. Cara added two vouchers to the posted list. (Bills in the mail.) Scott Meints made a motion to approve the amended agenda. Trevor Meints seconded the motion. All in favor – motion carried. Dana called for any conflict of interest on agenda items. There were no conflicts.
Minutes were handed out from the August 6thmeeting. Trevor Meints made a motion to approve the minutes. Sam Hoppock seconded the motion. All were in favor – motion carried.
Warrant Vouchers Web – fire prevention – 102.94; JVT – fire prevention – 213.01; North-western Energy – electricity – 1476.61; Agtegra – fuel – 96.25; Jeremy Dosch– August wages –633.98; Cara Dennert – August wages– 1317.60; Hansen Excavating – blading roads – 765.31; Stockwell Engineering – 6267.80; Menards – 46.77; Brown County Treasurer – mosquito control – 1593.89; Double D Lot Services – August lawn care – 7382.00; Web – fire prevention – 55.94; Northwestern Energy – electricity – 1167.84
Scott Meints made a motion to approve the vouchers. Sam Hoppock seconded the motion. All in favor - motion carried.
COMMUNITY COMMENTS / CORRESPONDENCE: - SD Community Foundation, Chris Anderson – building permit for Firehall; Web Water – rate increase
UNFINISHED BUSINESS- wastewater and drainage plans/ Stockwell Engineering, Regarding Voller’s trees, Dana contacted Andrew Murray to clarify bid to have trees removed. It will be \$4500 to cut the trees down, grind stumps, fill holes with gravel and haul them to the park. The board discussed the bid and what to do with the trees. Scott Meints made a motion to remove the trees and put them in the old park. Sam Hoppock seconded the motion. All were in favor - motion carried.
Nuisances – Letters will be sent to a couple residents in regards to ordinance violations.
Streets – There was some concern brought to the board regarding the culverts near Agtegra. The grass in the area has plugged up the culverts. Trevor and Jeremy will use a fire truck and blow out the culvert to open it up again. The city is working on getting a couple loads of gravel for the streets. Julie mentioned that the land on the north edge of town needs a street sign to make it easier to find for 911 purposes. Scott will find a sign to put up at that corner.
Parks – Jeremy has been working on the ballpark well. There is a control box issue. Extra filters have been bought for the wells. They will be installed soon to check the iron levels before the water is shut off for the winter. Jeremy & Park View walked around the park evaluating trees and what to do with them before fall.
Lagoon/Sewer-no report
Rubble Site – no report
NEW BUSINESS Executive Session to discuss city attorney started at 7:35pm. Council came out of executive session at 8:00 pm. The council worked on the 2026 City of Columbia Budget. Trevor Meints made a motion to accept the first reading of the 2026 Budget. Sam Hoppock seconded the motion. All were in favor – motion carried.
FINANCIAL REPORT –
Cara presented bank balances. Trevor Meints made a motion to accept the financial reports as given. Scott Meints seconded the motion. All were in favor – motion carried.
August 31, 2025, balances: SF - \$ 100,383.04; SF Money Market –\$ 152,879.52; GF - \$ 193,200.58; GF Money Market - \$ 51,297.17; CD Money Market - \$ 41,658.44
FIT - \$ 15,981.13; Cash on hand - \$0

Trevor Meints made a motion to go into executive session to discuss city attorney. Scott Meints seconded the motion. Start time 7:35 p.m. End time 8:00 p.m. Mayor Mohr adjourned the meeting.
Next Special City Council Meeting regarding the 2026 Budget will be Monday September 22, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.
Next regular City Council Meeting – Wednesday, October 1st, 2025 – 7:00 p.m
Submitted by Cara Dennert, Finance Officer
Published September 10, 2025 at the total approximate cost of \$42.13 and may be viewed free of charge at www.sdpublicnotices.com. 26001

Groton City
Abeln Appeal

NOTICE OF APPEAL HEARING
The Groton City Council will be holding a public hearing on September 16, 2025, at 7:00pm CDT at City Hall, 120 N Main Street, Groton, SD for an appeal filed by Mark Abeln of the Groton Planning and Zoning Commission’s decision on August 25, 2025, to deny a special exception of Chapter 11.01, Section 11.0104 of the Groton Zoning Ordinance. The special exception was to building storage units in a Residential (R-3) District located at 9 E Railroad Avenue, Groton, SD, legally described as Lot 10, Block 43, of the Third Addition, Groton, SD.
Any person wishing to present testimony for or against this appeal may appear in person or by representative at the above time and place.
Douglas Heinrich
Zoning Administrator
Published September 10, 2025 at the total approximate cost of \$9.74 and may be viewed free of charge at www.sdpublicnotices.com. 26002

Westport Town
Sept. 1 Meeting

Town of Westport General Meeting
The Town of Westport met on September 1, 2025 at 7:00 p.m., with Mitch Wilson, Shane Storm, and Deb Schlosser present. Troy Tschappat was absent.
The following bills were presented:
City General: NW Energy-utilities (\$332.85), Groton Independent-August minutes and water/sewer resolution (\$35.66), Mitch Wilson-payroll (\$1,225.00), Shane Storm-payroll (\$425.00), Troy Tschappat-payroll (\$150.00), Deb Schlosser-payroll (\$900.00), Jeff Schroeder-payroll (\$657.97), Brown County Treasurer-mosquito spraying (\$450.00), Menards-town hall supplies (\$36.95)
Sewer: NW Energy-Lift Station utilities (\$46.96), Richard LaBay-sewer drain (\$498.00)
Water: WEB-water (\$2158.61), Banyon Data Systems Inc.-UB Support and UB Meter Device Support (\$1,260.00), Water District Maintenance- water sampling (\$688.78), K & S Plumbing, Inc-meter installation (\$340.08)
Shane Storm motioned, second by Mitch Wilson to pay all bills.
The following deposits were presented:
City General: State of SD (\$4086.13), Brown County Collections (\$465.85), Interest (\$100.33)
Sewer: Resident Payments (\$2133.18)
Water: Resident Payments (\$3199.76)
Old Business: none
New Business: Motion by Mitch Wilson, second by Shane Storm to table lift station fence bid. Recommendations from Safety Benefits, Inc. were reviewed.
Meeting dismissed at 7:41 p.m.
Deb Schlosser, Finance Officer
Published September 10, 2025 at the total approximate cost of \$16.97 and may be viewed free of charge at www.sdpublicnotices.com. 26003



INVITATION TO BID
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT The Groton City Council of the City of Groton, South Dakota, will open bids for a 3-year cash rent lease for 95 acres, more or less, located on the Southeast Quarter (SW 1/4) of Section 19, Township 124, Range 60 which is six miles north of Groton on Highway 37, which is known as the Groton City Airport land, on October 7, 2025 at 7:00pm (local time) at Groton City Hall, 120 N Main Street, Groton, SD. Received sealed bids will be opened and read aloud.
The Lease will be for a 3-year period commencing January 1, 2026, and terminating December 31, 2028. Payment of rent will be due each year, one-half on April 1, and one-half on September 1. The first payment would be due April 1, 2026.
Questions or requests for further information or mailed bids should be directed to the City Finance Office, PO Box 587, Groton, SD 57445.
The City reserves the right to refuse any or all bids, to waive any informalities in the bidding and to award the contract in the best interests of the City of Groton, SD. The City further reserves the right to terminate their lease or any part thereof if the land will be needed for non-farm or municipal use. Rent per acre would then be reduced accordingly.
Exact acreage will be determined by ASC Office determination.
September 2, 2025
Douglas J. Heinrich
Finance Officer
City of Groton, SD
Published September 10 and 17, 2025 at the total approximate cost of \$30.54 and may be viewed free of charge at www.sdpublicnotices.com. 26004

Bates Township
Weed Notice

BATES TOWNSHIP WEED NOTICE:
OWNERS & TENANTS of Bates Township are hereby notified and required, according to law, to cut all weeds, grass, and trees in road ditches adjacent to their property or tenanted by them within Bates township on or before October 1st, 2025 or same will be hired done by the township board and assessed property taxes at the rate of \$300 per half mile.
Bates Township Board of Supervisors reminds all landowners and tenants that the road right-of-way extends 33 feet from the center of the township road. This ditch is to be maintained and mowed. Any crops planted in the road right-of-way will be mowed and charged to the landowner. Landowner is responsible for spraying all noxious weeds.
Bates Township Board of Supervisors
Betty Geist
Township Clerk
Published September 10 and 17, 2025 at the total approximate cost of \$19.23 and may be viewed free of charge at www.sdpublicnotices.com. 26005

Groton City
Sept. 2 Meeting

September 2, 2025
The Groton City Council met on the above date at 7:00pm at 120 N Main Street for their first monthly meeting with the following members present: Bahr, Cutler, Nehls, Wambach, and Mayor Hanlon presiding. Also present were Attorney Chad Locken, Douglas Heinrich, Todd Gay, Karen DeBrine, Lynette Grieve, Elizabeth Varin, Dwight Zerr, and Terry Herron.
Moved by Nehls and seconded by Cutler to approve the agenda with the change to agenda item no. 4 to reflect the correct address of 116 N 1st Street. All members present voted aye.
Public comments were welcomed pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1,

but none were received.
Department reports were reviewed and discussed.
Zerr, Gay, and Herron exited the meeting.
Moved by Cutler and seconded by Nehls to affirm the Groton Planning and Zoning Commission’s decision to approve a variance at 116 N 1st Street for a porch/deck within 6 feet of the east lot line. Nehls, Cutler, and Wambach voted aye. Bahr voted nay. Shilhanek and Babcock were absent.
DeBrine and Grieve exited the meeting.
Moved by Nehls and seconded by Bahr to deny the stop sign at 1st Street and 2nd Avenue. All members present voted aye.
No action was taken on the quotes for the permanent radar signs on Highway 12 and Highway 37.
Moved by Wambach and seconded by Bahr to accept the resignation of Douglas Hamilton from the Groton Planning and Zoning Commission. All members present voted aye.
Moved by Cutler and seconded by Wambach to begin accepting bids for the 3-year lease of the Groton Municipal Airport land. Sealed bids are due by October 7, 2025. All members present voted aye.
Moved by Nehls and seconded by Wambach to accept the estimate from Sam Bahr for painting the interior of the Groton Community Center so long as it does not exceed \$6,160. All members present voted aye.
The minutes from the previous meeting were approved on a motion by Bahr and seconded by Cutler. All members present voted aye.
Moved by Nehls and seconded by Wambach to authorize the following bills for payment. All members present voted aye.

Weekly SUDOKU

Answer

7	5	6	8	2	4	9	3	1
8	3	1	7	6	9	5	2	4
9	2	4	5	3	1	8	7	6
1	9	5	4	8	2	7	6	3
4	6	8	1	7	3	2	9	5
3	7	2	9	5	6	1	4	8
5	1	3	6	9	7	4	8	2
2	4	7	3	1	8	6	5	9
6	8	9	2	4	5	3	1	7

ACROSS
1 Cambridge sch.
4 Tizzies
9 NPR's Shapiro
12 "Rocks"
13 Old Testament book
14 Guitar master Paul
15 Puzzle solver's epiphany
17 "Tasty!"
18 Director DuVernay
19 Postpones
21 Supervised
24 Appear
25 Blackbird
26 Back talk
28 "Swell!"
31 Aliases
33 Corn core
35 "Go no further!"
36 Nerd
38 "Don't Start Now" singer Lipa
40 Tolkien creature
41 First lady of scat
43 Distress signals
45 Band around a sleeve
47 Reunion gp.
48 Grazing tract
49 Black Sea region

Payroll, \$40,628.98, Employee salaries; Administrative, \$6,119.25, ; Public Safety, \$9,843.50, ; Public Works, \$16,907.90, ; Culture & Recreation, \$7,758.33, ; Jerry Wisdom, \$50.00, Camping fee reimbursement; Dacotah Bank, \$8,993.56, Withholding/SS/Medicare; Dakotaland FCU, \$600.00, Employee savings; Dacotah Bank, \$4,078.69, Withholding/SS/Medicare; Dacotah Bank, \$100.00, HSA contributions; Aflac, \$435.76, Employee insurance; Colonial Life, \$69.40, Employee insurance; Allied Benefit Systems, \$14,403.02, Employee insurance; Reliance Standard Life Insurance, \$88.10, Employee insurance; Cole Papers, Inc., \$83.62, Garbage bags - Community Center; Runnings, \$1,323.23, Battery cable, shovels, weed trimmer, oil, suction hose, couplers, adapters - Multiple Depts.; SD Department of Health , \$528.00, Water/sewer/pool testing; Vesperis, \$5,039.82, Mosquito control chemicals; April Abeln, \$28.00, Employee mileage reimbursement - Dacotah Prairie Museum luncheon; Advance Auto Parts, \$36.55, Relay for PD Tahoe; Verizon Wireless, \$40.01, Wireless router - Rubble Site; Irby, Inc., \$1,419.26, Rubber goods testing, heat shrink, FR shirts, copper straps, bracket equipment, connectors, anchor hooks, curved washers - Electric Dept. ; VESTIS, \$67.26, Rug rent - City Hall; Bierschbach Equipment & Supply, \$1,098.63, Submersible trash pump and adapters - Sewer Dept.; Bobcat of Aberdeen, \$3,523.31, Inspection/500hr service & extended 3yr warranty - Street Dept.; Groton Garden Club, \$105.55, Reimbursement for Garden Club expenses - Parks; SD Supplemental Retirement, \$390.00, Supplemental retire-

DOWN
1 Actress Farrow
2 German noun
3 Chai, e.g.
4 Digging tool
5 Itinerant
6 British verb ending
7 Looks after

ment; NW Energy, \$1,086.88, Natural gas service - Swimming Pool & PD; Dennis "Mike" Olson, \$498.75, Code enforcement services ; Dollar General, \$225.19, Bleach, toilet paper, usb-c charger, box fan, garbage bags, Sharpies, totes, duct tape, flyswatters, bug spray, paper towels, bottled water - Multiple Depts.; S&S Lumber Company, \$317.26, Screw pin clevis, spark plug, pesticide, outlet, box, cover plate, trimmer line, retaining ring, screws, light bulbs, o-rings, silicone, grass seed, bar chain oil, Sea Foam, bug spray, hooks, impact drill set, adhesive, plexiglass, chain hook - Multiple Depts.; Pipe Detectives, Inc., \$4,777.20, Pipe relining - Sewer Dept.; Team Lab Chemical Corporation, \$1,650.00, Sewer chemicals.
Varin exited the meeting.
Moved by Wambach and seconded by Cutler to adjourn into executive session for personnel and legal matters 1-25-2 (1) & (3) at 8:03pm. All members present voted aye. Council reconvened into regular session at 9:17pm.
Moved by Bahr and seconded by Wambach to authorize the re-bidding of the 2025 city roof repair project to begin on October 21, 2025. Sealed bids will be due by November 18, 2025, at 5:00pm. All members present voted aye.
Moved by Nehls and seconded by Bahr to adjourn the meeting at 9:18pm. All members present voted aye.
Scott Hanlon, Mayor
Douglas Heinrich, Finance Officer
Published September 10, 2025 at the total approximate cost of \$51.46 and may be viewed free of charge at www.sdpublicnotices.com. 26006

King Crossword

1	2	3		4	5	6	7	8		9	10	11	
12				13						14			
15				16						17			
				18			19		20				
21	22	23					24						
25				26		27		28			29	30	
31				32		33		34		35			
36				37		38		39		40			
			41		42		43		44				
45	46						47						
48					49		50				51	52	53
54					55						56		
57					58						59		

54	New England cape	8	Lustrous fabric	32	Vend
55	Yo-Yo Ma's instrument	9	Yale, to Jodie Foster	34	Beast on a nickel
56	Farm female	10	— Martin (cognac)	37	Laundry additive
57	Dijon denial	11	Doctrines	39	Los —, New Mexico
58	Head lights?	16	Irate	42	Confused
59	"Evil Woman" gp.	20	Cask sediment	44	"— Blue?"
		21	Round of applause	45	Astronaut Shepard
				46	Gambling city
				50	Unwell
				51	Formerly known as
				52	Hogwarts messenger
				53	Old Oldsmobile

Groton Area Volleyball Stays Perfect With 3-1 Win at Webster

The Groton Area Tigers continued their unbeaten start to the season Tuesday night, defeating the Webster Bearcats 3-1 in a Northeast Conference volleyball clash on the road. With the win, the Tigers improved to 4-0 on the year, while Webster dropped to 2-3.

Groton came out strong, taking the opening set 25-19 behind a balanced offensive attack. Taryn Traphagen led the way early with five kills, while Chesney Weber added four. Rylee Dunker and Jaedyn Penning chipped in three kills apiece as the Tigers built a lead and held off Webster down the stretch.

"We were hitting the ball really hard at them," said Groton head coach Chelsea Hanson. "For the most part, the kills we earned were truly earned — they weren't because of anything breaking down on their side. They did a great job of keeping the ball alive."

The second set was tight early, featuring five ties and two lead changes, before Groton surged ahead behind strong serving and net play to claim a dominant 25-10 victory. Weber was a force in that frame with three ace serves and a kill, while Dunker added two kills.

"In that second set, we had just one mistake the whole way through," Hanson said. "Obviously, that's not sustainable, and we knew that. Sometimes high school kids don't always understand they can't ride that high forever. But when we're playing that clean, it's fun to watch."

Webster refused to go quietly, battling back in a thrilling third set. The game was tied five different times, and the lead changed hands multiple times. Groton held a slim 13-11 advantage and led much of the way before Webster clawed back, ultimately edging out a 26-24 win. Tevan Hanson and Traphagen each had three kills for the Tigers in the set.

"I would've liked to win that third set," Hanson admitted. "But at the end of the day, I told the girls a win's a win — whether it takes three, four, or five sets. I will quote the great Nicole Marzahn who said more games, more stats!"

Groton regrouped quickly in the fourth set, jumping out to a 6-1 lead and never looking back in a 25-17 clincher. Hansen tallied four kills in the set, and Dunker added three to seal the victory.

Match Stats

The Tigers finished with 10 ace serves on the night:

Chesney Weber – 4, McKenna Tietz – 3, Jaedyn Penning – 2, Sydney Locke – 1

In attacks, Groton went 130-of-154 with 54 total kills: Rylee Dunker – 25-30, 12 kills; Tevan Hanson – 23-27, 12 kills; Taryn Traphagen – 21-23, 11 kills; Kella Tracy – 5 kills; Jerrica Locke – 1 kill; Jaedyn Penning – 6 kills

Assists: Weber – 39, Locke – 5

Digs: Jerrica Locke – 17, Weber – 11, Sydney Locke – 10, Tietz – 10

Blocks: Tracy – 1 solo, 1 assist; Weber – 1 solo; Traphagen – 1 assist

Webster was led by Mallory Steiner and Carly Sannes, who each had four kills. Steiner added an ace and a block, while Sanes had two blocks. Other Bearcat contributors included Jaden Lorenzberg (2 kills), Sarah Zubke (2 kills), Jersey Johnson (1 ace), and Chloe Mammenga (1 kill).

Coach Hanson was pleased with her team's effort and balanced attack.

"When we're scoring points — really scoring points — that's what matters to me," she said. "We're not relying on other teams' mistakes to win games. Tonight, we had several players in double-digit kills, and that's the kind of offensive balance we want."

Upcoming Matches

The Tigers will face a tough test Thursday when they travel to Aberdeen to take on the 3-1 Roncalli Cavaliers.

Webster will host Clark-Willow Lake the same night.

Lower-Level Results

Junior Varsity — Groton def. Webster 2-1 (25-18, 23-25, 15-8)

Groton leaders: McKenna Tietz 3 aces, 1 kill; Kinsley Rowen 2 kills; Tevan Hanson 1 ace; Sydney Locke 5 aces; Makenna Krause 5 kills, 2 aces; Emerlee Jones 7 kills, 1 ace; Elizabeth Cole 6 kills; Libby Althoff 4 kills, 3 aces; Neely Althoff 4 kills.

Webster leaders: Chloe Kvernevig 2 kills, 2 aces, 1 block; Cartney Hanson 4 kills.

C Match — Groton def. Webster 2-0 (25-14, 25-14)

Groton scorers: Neely Althoff 5 kills, 2 aces; Brooklyn Spanier 3 kills; Arianna Dinger 1 ace; Kinsley Rowen 2 kills, 1 ace; Audrey Davis 3 kills,

1 ace; Tori Schuster 1 ace; Ryelle Gilbert 3 aces; Rylen Ekern 2 aces, 1 kill; Addison Hoeft 6 kills.

Junior High: Groton won both matches 2-0.



605/397-2311
www.grotonford.com

Sunflower Classic Scramble Couples Tournament

Sunday, September 7, 2025

Championship Flight

1st Place – Brevin Fliehs & Carly Guthmiller - 68

2nd Place – Erica Hunstad & Ken Lynch – 68

3rd Place – Connor & Carleen Hanson - 74

4th Place – Greg Rahm & Bonnie Wagner – 74

Brad & Dar Larson – 75

Josh & Madison Claymore - 76

Steve and Betty Dunker – 77

First Flight

1st Place – Mike & Cherry Baker - 73

2nd Place – Reid & Carlee Johnson – 74

3rd Place – Ian & Rylee Rose – 77

4th Place – Monty & Britt Evans – 78

Blake & Leah Ronning – 78

Tony and Mandy Grohs – 78

Dan Duenwald & Keri Kline – 78

Second Flight

1st Place – Paul & Carrie Flach - 75

2nd Place–Skip Kettering and Suzie Easthouse – 80

3rd Place – Randy & Sue Stanley – 80

4th Place – Brad & Brenda Waage – 80

Tony & Brenda Madsen – 81

Lance & Cindy Frohling – 84

TJ & Marcy Harder – 86

Nathan Weige & Alison Jung – 87

Third Flight

1st Place – Torre & Denise Raap – 87

2nd Place – Liam & Nicole Johnson – 87

3rd Place – Josh & Josie Heupel – 91

4th Place – Larry & Shirlee Frohling – 93

Roy & Ranae Wiege – 97

Michelle Johnson & Boston Marlow – 100

Deb Fredrickson & Casey Hutchinson – 100

Tyler & Karen Kampa – 103

Pin Prizes

Closest to the Pin #4 (Women's) – Suzie Easthouse

Closest to the Pin #8 (Men's) – Tony Madsen

Longest Putt #9 – Josh Claymore



Championship: Brevin Fliehs and Carly Guthmiller with a score of 68.

Weekly SUDOKU

		6		2	4	9	3	
	3	1	7			5		
				3			7	
	9	5	4		2			3
	6	8				2	9	5
3	7	2		5	6	1	4	8
	1			9				
			3		8	6		9
	8				5	3		

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ♦♦

♦ Moderate ♦♦ Challenging
♦♦♦ HOO BOY!

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Thank a Caregiver Today!
National Assisted Living Week®
September 7-13, 2025



EARTHTALK

Dear EarthTalk: Are escaped balloons a problem for the environment and what can we do to prevent it from happening?
-- Meg D., Larchmont, NY

Escaped balloons have become a prevalent source of land and marine pollution worldwide, so much so that balloons were ranked as the third deadliest form of marine debris behind fishing gear and plastic bags. Marine debris, defined as human-created waste in large bodies of water, has significant negative impacts on wildlife, human health and safety, global economies and habitats. One way balloons can impact wildlife is by entangling animals, leading to serious injury or death in extreme cases. Animals may also attempt to consume balloons, causing throat or digestive tract obstruction and gut damage. Christian Daniels, creator of the Desert Balloon Project, explained, "Desert tortoises mistake them for flowers and will eat them. The desert tortoises are already in danger with the constant building and loss of habitat and predation, and the mylar balloons cause another disturbance with them." Besides desert tortoises, birds and bighorn sheep are also often impacted. Beyond impacts on marine life, balloons are a big contributor to marine and land pollution, as they're able to travel vast distances—over a thousand miles in certain cases. Foil Mylar balloons cannot break down and instead simply divide into smaller pieces of plastic. While the standard latex balloon is biodegradable, the breakdown process takes



Escaped balloons are increasingly becoming a nuisance and a contributor to the degradation of our natural environment... Credit: Pexels.com.

several months. The plastic pieces that do not break down end up as microplastics, turning up in lakes or rivers that are used as drinking sources. These microplastics can also degrade the beauty of coastal environments, leading to economic loss in tourist areas.

Furthermore, balloons are infrastructure hazards, as they can cause power outages. This is due to the conduciveness of their foil layer. Released balloons can also become entangled in power lines, leading to outages and damage to transmission equipment. These effects are so prevalent that Clean Virginia Waterways of Longwood University gathered evidence that up to 20 percent of electrical power outages are caused by balloons making contact with power lines.

To combat balloon pollution, various policies have been passed. For example, as a result of Christian Daniels's efforts, Nevada Governor Lombardo signed AB194 into law, which effectively banned balloon releases in the state. Nine other states in the U.S. have implemented laws against balloon releases, while several colleges have stopped balloon releases at football games.

Community efforts can help further tackle pollution. Thus far, the combined efforts of 16 million volunteers for the Ocean Conservancy's International Coastal Cleanup have collected 340 million pounds of trash. Other effective methods include ceasing balloon releases, particularly in large amounts, reusing balloons in good condition, and giving latex balloons to local recycling facilities after use. Through these collective efforts, the negative environmental effects of balloons can be significantly mitigated.

• EarthTalk® is produced by Roddy Scheer & Doug Moss for the 501(c)3 nonprofit EarthTalk. See more at <https://emagazine.com>. To donate, visit <https://earthtalk.org>. Send questions to: question@earthtalk.org.

"What Questions Do You Have?"

We have all heard it before. Before the end of the visit, the doctor will usually ask, "Do you have any questions?" That is usually the precise moment that my mind goes completely blank. Every question I can think of seems silly or embarrassing. I know the doctor is busy so

I don't want to "bother" him/her by taking up too much of their time. I really do not want to look stupid or ignorant. So, I say nothing, smile and the doctor leaves the room shortly afterwards. As soon as that door closes, the flood gates open and all the questions I should have asked bubble to the surface. Now it feels too late to ask them. Sound familiar?

As we begin our next season of On Call with the Prairie Doc, I encourage all our viewers to come to us with those questions. This show is unique because we ask our audience to engage with the show. We do not want you to just be passive consumers of the knowledge. We want you to be co-creators of the show with us. While we will never replace your primary care physician, we want to answer the questions that you did ask during your last clinic visit. Since you can submit questions anonymously, ask that question you were too embarrassed to ask. Use this show to fact check that health information you saw on social media or heard someone talk about at the local café.

We work hard to find the local experts for each show who can share with us their expertise. At the end of each season, we review our shows and look at what questions were asked. We see how many questions were answered for each show and what topics resonated the most with our viewers. We try to determine what topics you want to hear more about. We also look for emerging topics so you have up to date health information that is based in science and built on trust.

The hardest part of planning this show is narrowing down all the topics we want to discuss with you to fit within our season. This is why we will have several "Ask Anything" shows each season. These shows ensure that you, our viewers, will always have a show where any question not only welcomed, but encouraged. The beautiful part of our show is that each show is fluid and we can pivot our focus based on the information you want most. The more you interact with this show, the better it will become. After twenty-four seasons we have yet to run out of questions to answer. This week and every week to follow, please ask anything. We will be here to answer.

Dr. Jill Kruse is a hospitalist at the Brookings Health System in Brookings, SD. She serves as one of the Prairie Doc Volunteer Hosts during its 24th Season providing Health Education Based on Science, Built on Trust. Follow The Prairie Doc® at www.prairiedoc.org, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Tik Tok. Prairie Doc Programming includes On Call with the Prairie Doc®, a medical Q&A show (most Thursdays at 7pm on SDPB, YouTube and streaming on Facebook), 2 podcasts, and a Radio program (on SDPB, Sundays at 6am and 1pm).

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