

Yankton Targets Combined Team Title At State

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The Yankton track and field program boasted a pair of top-five state finishes a year ago, something only two of the 16 other schools in Class AA could claim. This year, the Bucks and Gazelles want to take that claim one step further and earn the combined team title.



Yankton will look to claim the title, based on the best combined finishes between boys and girls, as the 2010 season begins.

"Our state goal every year is the combined team championship," said head coach Luke Youmans. "We look at that as the biggest measure of success."

"We feel it is within our grasp this year."

The Gazelles return the majority of the points from a squad that placed third as a team. The Bucks return several of their top competitors from a team that finished fifth.

"It seems like every year, we do not lose very many seniors, but we have a lot of quality athletes in those losses," Youmans said. "The guys took a big hit in losing Jordan Mueller and Jared Ailts. Krista Creager was a contributor in a lot of events for the girls."

The Bucks also lost Chris Hubbs, a double-placewinner in the hurdle events. Mueller placed in four events, including runner-up finishes in the high jump and triple jump. Ailts placed in the 800 and 1600, and was part of the team's school-record 3200-meter relay squad that finished second.

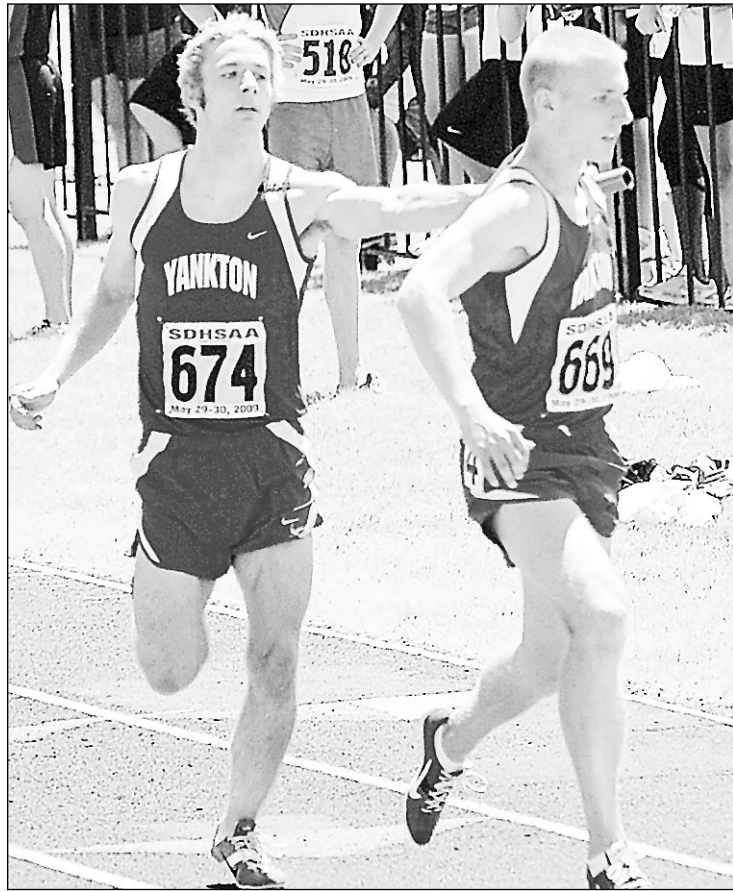
For the Gazelles, Creager was a placewinner in the 800 and was part of two place-winning relays, including a victory in the 3200 relay. Place-winning vaulters Jordan Lillie and Cassie Shafer also graduated.

While Yankton took big graduation losses, it also inherited an outstanding freshman class.

"We have a great incoming freshman class that will help fill the gaps left by graduation last year," Youmans said. "We have a ton of young kids running in the sprints, quality kids that we feel will be able to contribute in the relays and individual races as the year goes on."

In the middle distances, junior Tyler Sternhagen and Rachel Weinandt lead their respective squads, with senior Jayna Specht returning as a state qualifier in the 400. Weinandt placed fifth in the 800 a year ago, and was part of the Gazelles' winning 3200 relay.

"Tyler Sternhagen had a great sophomore year, and we expect great things this year," Youmans



Returning Placewinners

TOP LEFT: Alex Hohenthanner (3200 relay), left, and Travis Brenner (800, 1600, 3200 relay) RIGHT: Megan Hilson, front, and Mariah Hofer (both 800, 1600, 3200 relay) BOTTOM LEFT: Christine Broders (shot put) NOT PICTURED: Mitch Yaggie (1600, 3200, 3200 relay); Emily Anderson (high jump, triple jump); Rachel Weinandt (800, 1600 relay, 3200 relay), Mikala Hora (100 hurdles); Kelsey Fitzgerald (high jump); Jayna Specht (1600 relay) NOTE: Names for the girls' medley relay, which placed sixth, were not available.



said. "Rachel Weinandt and Jayna Specht are a couple options that we can throw in a 400, whether it's an open 400 or the medley."

The distance races will again be a big point-gainer for Yankton. The Bucks scored 22 points in the 800 through the 3200, while the Gazelles scored 36 points. For both teams, distance races accounted for better than a third of their score.

"That is certainly our bread and butter. We are incredibly strong on both the boys' and girls' side," Youmans said.

Seniors Travis Brenner and Mitch Yaggie return as double-placewinners in the individual races on the boys' side. Seniors Alex Hohenthanner, Marc Wilcox and Jeff Grossenborg also return with state meet experience.

Senior Megan Hilson returns after winning the 3200 and finishing second in the 1600 a year ago. Senior Mariah Hofer also placed in both events. Both were part of the winning 3200 relay squad.

But the team's distance prowess does not reside solely in the senior class.

"We have some other younger kids that we hope to see contribute," Youmans said. "Because we have so many seniors, we can use this year as a development year so that, when we graduate this class, it won't be such a huge hit for us."

Yankton returns a state placewinner in the hurdles in freshman Mikala Hora, as well as several other talented hurdlers on the girls' side.

"On the girls' side, we should

be very strong," Youmans said of the hurdles. "Angie Dvorak, Chloe Cornemann and Mikala Hora are three that should do very well at the conference level, and hopefully at the state level."

The boys' hurdles took a pair of tough graduation losses on Hubbs and Jordan Smith, who struggled through injuries last season after being a state placewinner earlier in his career. The team, though, has athletes ready to step in.

"We're certainly excited about Justin Lillie coming back," Youmans said. "Logan Ulmer is definitely a factor in the 300 hurdles. He was right on the cusp of qualifying for state a year ago. Ferry Shafer has some experience in the 300 hurdles as well."

The Gazelles return 21 state

meet points in the field events and have the potential for even more.

"The field events should be another place where we can put up points, especially for the girls," Youmans noted.

The girls return a double-placewinner in the jumps in junior Emily Anderson, who placed second in the high jump. Freshmen Kelsey Fitzgerald also placed in the high jump. Hora posted high marks in the high jump a year ago. Junior Rachael Johnson vaulted onto the radar with a runner-up finish in the long jump at Dan Lennon.

On the boys' side, Mueller's graduation wiped out the 20 points Yankton scored in the jumps. Senior Ethan Metheny and sophomore Zach Sage return after

having qualified for state in the high jump.

"This will be a development year for us, but we're hoping for one or two to surprise us," Youmans said. "Connor Fitzsimmons and Neil Hohenthanner are guys who have had some long and triple jump success."

The Bucks return some experienced vaulters in Shafer and Metheny. Laura Buckman is the top returning vaulter on the girls' side.

"We bring back a strong boys' pole vault group. There are several that could be impact guys as the year goes on," Youmans said. "Buckman has varsity experience, but there are a lot of newcomers to pole vault, so it will be a development year for us. There are a couple there that could potentially be impact athletes for us in the next couple of years."

The Gazelles return a state placewinner in the shot put in senior Christine Broders. The top returning placewinner in the shot, she also qualified for state in the discus. Fellow senior Kayla Salonen also qualified in both events.

"We have a strong class of girls' throwers, led by our two seniors," Youmans said. "Because of that, we don't have to have big expectations out of the younger throwers. It buys us a year to develop the younger girls."

The boys also have several young throwers with the potential to score points in the future.

"We're still really young," Youmans said. "It's not going to be overnight, but I am confident that, within the next couple of years, we're going to have a couple of young athletes that could be studs in the throws."

Youmans has expectations of the Gazelles successfully defending its Eastern South Dakota Conference girls' title.

"Until somebody beats our girls, they have to be the favorite," he said. "We have an incredibly well-rounded team, a lot of quality in a lot of events."

The Bucks will be hoping to make it a clean sweep in Pierre on May 15.

"We should be very competitive," Youmans said. "We have set a goal to take ESD and, if a few of those younger kids step up and fill some holes, we have a chance."

While the overall team goal for state is the combined team title, Youmans would not be opposed to winning one or both of the team titles along the way.

"We want to show people that our program is quality across the board. The combined team title is the best show of that overall quality," he said. "If we pick up a team title along the way, that would just be icing on top of the cake."

Tanager Girls Look To Build On State Tourney Trip



VERMILLION: Morgan Hower

VERMILLION — After an up-and-down season that saw the Tanagers send four relays to state, the Vermillion girls' track team is excited to begin what should be a good 2010 season.



The Tanagers graduated just two relay runners, Mariah Dodson and Karissa Martin. Martin was the lead leg on three of the team's relays, including the place-winning 400 relay.

"With a Dickens-style saga, our team had the best of times and the worst of times," Vermillion head coach Lenni Billberg said of

2009. "Our young kids really improved over the season, qualifying in all the relays except the 4x800. Our kids worked hard all season and performed all-out efforts, suffering a bout of bad luck."

But the Tanagers return 10 letterwinners, including four seniors — Hannah and Sophie Nelich-Arobba, Kayla Munger and Sarah Day. Junior Janani Ragathoman returns, as do sophomores Emily McClelland, Ely Glover, Kylie Fischbach and Christine Epping.

"With the leadership of Kayla Munger, Sophie and Hannah Nelich-Arobba and Ashley Brunick, our team should really make their mark this season," Billberg noted. Sophomore thrower Beth

Syzonski is also expected to be a key contributor, as are many of the younger athletes.

"We have a wealth of kids to draw from," Billberg said. "We are young and inexperienced, but hard-working and full of potential."

To put together a team capable of scoring big points at state, the team needs to solve the ever-challenging puzzle of who fits best where.

"We need to find the right relay balance," Billberg said. "We also have to stay healthy and continue to improve throughout the season."

Coaching with Billberg are Jay Drake, Len Griffith and Kelly Fischbach.

Centerville Tornados Track Schedule

4/6/10	Turner Co. Relays	Centerville
4/13/10	Centerville Rotary Relays	Centerville
4/15/10	Menno Relays	Menno
4/22/10	Freeman Flyer Relays	Freeman
4/24/10	Flevares Relays	Tyndall
4/27/10	Menno Quad Track Meet	Menno
4/30-5/1/10	Howard Wood Relays	Sioux Falls
5/1/10	Parker Track Meet	Parker
5/4/10	Don Diede Relays	Freeman
5/11/10	TVC	Centerville
5/20/10	Region IV B	TBA
5/28-29/10	State B Track Meet	Sioux Falls

Golf Schedule

4/1/10	SES/SSS	Yankton
4/6/10	Freeman Academy Golf Invite	Freeman
4/13/10	IW Varsity Golf	Irene
4/27/10	Baltic Golf	Baltic
5/6/10	TVC Golf	Yankton

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