

Cheer Team Looks To Take Themselves To Next Level

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK
james.cimburek@yankton.net

Four years ago, Yankton was one of the first athletic programs to offer competitive cheer as a varsity sport. This year, with that first freshman class leading the way as seniors, the Gazelles will hope to take their competition to the next level.



The Yankton Gazelles boast four seniors on its 21-person roster as the 2010 campaign begins. Those seniors have already proven themselves great leaders, according to Yankton co-coach Kerry Svatos.

"They've come all the way through," she said of this year's senior class. "We see a lot of leadership in them. They're the people we look to for guidance for our younger athletes, for small-group leadership."

Seniors include Jenna Rembold, Kara Schanche, Lauren Valenscin and Michaela Wuestewald. The Gazelles also have five juniors: Courtney Fender, Kelsey Megard, Megan Christopher, Brooke Thury and Lindsay Vik. Not all of the upperclassmen, though, have come all the way through the program.

"We've picked up a couple of girls that had been sideline cheerleaders in the past," Svatos said. "Last year we had one sophomore. This year we have five juniors."

Sophomores include Michaela Trail, Maggie Spak, Allyssa Schroeder, Shelby Hammit, Brianna McCloud, Morgan Privett, Logan Ramey, Cyndal Sathe and Kayle Diefenderfer. Jessica Popovich, Lexi Schremp and Thum Choicot are the freshmen on the squad.

Of the 21 athletes on the roster, only two did not have any cheer experience. One of those, Hammit, is a transfer with competitive dance experience.

After having an extremely young squad a year ago, the Gazelles are finding that the basics are coming back more quickly.

"One of our fliers (individuals thrown in the air during a routine) was brand new last year, and it took the entire season for her not to look petrified every time she went up," noted co-coach Angie Luken. "This year when she went up the first time, there was no problem."



"It's amazing what one year does for confidence and skill level. We're able to advance our skills more quickly."

The state championships return to Yankton for the third time in four years this year, after being held in Brandon in 2009. Hosting the state championship can have both a positive and negative effect, according to the Yankton coaches.

"I think it puts some pressure on the girls," Luken said. "When you're on your home court, you want to perform at your best."

But Svatos noted that it can give athletes an adrenaline rush as well.

"When it's at home, you can bring your grandparents, your aunts and uncles, your neighbors, your classmates," she said. "It gets you pumped up to be able to show off what you can do."

No matter what, the Gazelles have high expectations.

"We always have high aspirations for the team," Svatos said. "We expect great things from this team."

The Gazelles open the 2010 season Sept. 11 at home with the annual Yankton Invitational. The state championships will be held Nov. 13 at the Summit Center.



Nelson-Led Gazelles Eye Return To Top

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK
james.cimburek@yankton.net



With 10 seniors and several other veterans among the 31 athletes on the roster, the Yankton Gazelles will be looking to return to the top of the South Dakota prep competitive dance scene under first-year head coach Katie Nelson.

Nelson, who succeeded Jennifer Johnke as head coach, will be relying on her upperclassmen in every large-squad routine, she noted.

"The 10 seniors are our leaders. Nine of them dance on large

squads," she said. "It helps with experience, and the underclassmen look up to them."

With four routines — dance, pom, kick and jazz — athletes can potentially be out on the floor for up to 10 minutes. Preparing for those high-energy routines, each which run between 1:30 and 2:30, has been a point of emphasis for the Gazelles so far this season.

"We've been pushing from the start," Nelson said. "We're making

each workout 10 times harder than it usually is, and we're starting two-a-day practices.

"It will help us push through those two-minute long routines." Besides working to improve their fitness level, the Gazelles are working hard to improve their routines.

"I really want the girls to become a team right now, so they can dance as one," Nelson said. "Right now we're just trying to clean up our dances, working to compete at a higher level."

Back-to-back runner-up finishes

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example of a hard worker, and Ryan Lammers didn't think he could do this when he first came out," Dannenbring noted. "Both have turned into great runners, and this year we've become the training ground for wrestlers."

Besides Smith and Lammers, Mark Vetter, Brook Woehl and Matt Huber are wrestlers on the Bucks' squad. Vetter also ran JV a year ago.

The Bucks also have a number of underclassmen who will contend for varsity slots: Evan Burgeson, Jacob Bies, Bryce Cowman, Justin Grode and Ryan Olson.

"We look to have fun and get better throughout the season," Dannenbring said. "But we have every intention of repeating as state champions."

The girls lost just two runners from their championship team, the sixth title in seven years for the Gazelles. But both will be running at the Division I level, Megan Hilson at USD and Mariah Hofer at South Dakota State.

"We lost two front-runners in Hilson and Hofer," Dannenbring said. "But we have two more in Jenna Grossenburg and Whitlee Larson."

Grossenburg, in her first year of cross country, finished 15th at state. Larson, now a freshman, finished 17th. Senior Ciara Andrus placed just off the medals podium at 27th, but was a strong enough fifth runner to help the Gazelles to the team title, as well as their eighth straight Eastern South Dakota Conference crown.

"Both Jenna and Whitlee had great summers of running," Dannenbring noted. "Ciara looks better this year than she ever has at this point in the season. She's put herself in position to be successful right away."

Senior Sara Watt, who was also competed in the state meet, has prepared well for the season, according to Dannenbring. "She ran a lot of miles this summer, and she's in great shape," he said. "We look for her to fill one of our open spots, and be a leader on and off the course."

The challenge will be in filling the next three or four varsity positions, according to Dannenbring.

"We need to find our fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth runners," he said. "We are young and inexperienced. We try not to run middle schoolers

on varsity but, if they're talented enough and deserve to be on there, we will put them on there."

Among the runners competing for those open spots are Madeline Manning, Annie Kruse, Ashtyn Haak, Sarah Hicks and Shannon Doyle.

The 2010 season begins Aug. 27 with the Sioux Falls O'Gorman Invitational. Between then and the state meet, Oct. 23 at Huron, the team will work to improve as a unit, but enjoy the process.

"This is one of those seasons where we can have a lot of fun," Dannenbring said. "Last year our seniors had a lot of pressure on them. They wanted to finish strong, and they did it. Right now, every one else is thinking Yankton lost all its seniors, so we can just go out and run."

"That will allow us to be successful." But a younger team won't mean Dannenbring and assistant coaches Luke Youmans and Doug Haar will be lowering the expectations.

"We only have to win one race to win a championship," Dannenbring said. "We have two and a half months to prepare for one race."

"We have talented kids. We hope they're up to the challenge."

GOLF

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used to the different courses," he said. "We've got some good, young talent; a couple guys we can build around."

"Hopefully we can go out and beat some of the teams in our conference."

That'll be the test for the Bucks,

as Sime pointed to Watertown, Pierre and Huron to again be tough in the ESD. The ESD Conference tournament will be held in Mitchell.

As far as the state tournament, the Bucks will have their eyes on becoming a consistent team by that point, Sime said.

"If we set a goal to be in the top half of the conference and even at state, it'll be a very successful season," he noted.

The Bucks hosted Brandon Valley for a dual meet in Yankton on Aug. 24.

Gazelles Look To Reload

BY ROYAL MCGREGOR
sports@yankton.net

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article originally ran in the Aug. 21 edition of the Press & Dakotan.

The Yankton Gazelles are coming off a fifth-place finish at the state tournament and are looking to rebuild after the loss of seven seniors coming into this season.



"The weekend of the state tournament last year, we just couldn't hit the ball very well," Yankton co-head coach Bernie Goeden said.

This might have been a different story last year as the Gazelles had seniors to look to for leadership, but coming into this year it is going a whole different ball game as the juniors will be relied upon heavily.

"The seniors last season showed great leadership and hopefully that is going to help out our program this year," Goeden said. "Hopefully the younger girls will be able to follow in the footsteps that the seniors from last year showed."

The Yankton area won't see the last from one of the seniors that felt this season as Christine Broders will be playing softball at the University of South Dakota.

The Gazelles are welcoming back one of their seniors from last season Kelsey Grosshuesch, who will be attending USD in the fall and be the head coach of Yankton's junior varsity team.

Coming into this season Yankton has a lone senior on their roster Katelyn Munyer, but she has only played in the summer leagues, so the coaching staff doesn't really know what they are going to get from her.

"I'm not really sure how much leadership we are going to get from Katelyn this season, because this will be her first year playing this type of competitive softball," Goeden said. "She has softball experience, but it is in the summer leagues in Yankton."

The Gazelles do have four return-

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Bloomfield Bees Football			
9/3/10	Niobrara/Verdigre	H	A
9/10/10	Creighton	A	H
9/17/10	Howells	H	A
9/24/10	Chambers	H	A
10/1/10	St. Mary's	A	H
10/8/10	Newcastle	H	A
10/15/10	Wausa	A	H
10/22/10	Wynot	H	A
Bloomfield Queen Bees Volleyball			
09/07/10	Osmond	H	A
09/09/10	Wausa Triangular	A	H
09/09/10	Wausa Triangular	A	H
09/09/10	Wausa Triangular	A	H
09/13/10	Wausa	H	A
09/16/10	Wynot	H	A
09/20/10	Wynot	H	A
09/21/10	Hartington	H	A
09/23/10	Humphrey St. Francis	A	H
09/28/10	Wynot	A	H
10/05/10	Lynch	A	H
10/07/10	Cedar Catholic	H	A
10/09/10	Randolph Triangular	A	H
10/09/10	Randolph Triangular	A	H
10/12/10	Newcastle	H	A
10/14/10	West Boyd	A	H
10/18-10/19	Knox County Trn.	A	H
10/25-10/29	L&C Conference	TBA	A

Crofton Warrior Football			
9/2/10	Cedar Catholic	A	H
9/10/10	Wakefield	H	A
9/17/10	Wisner Pilger	H	A
9/25/10	Lutheran High Northeast	A	H
10/1/10	West Holt	A	H
10/8/10	Neligh Oakdale	H	A
10/15/10	Laurel Concord	A	H
10/21/10	Plainview	H	A
Crofton Lady Warrior Volleyball			
9/2/10	Neligh-Oakdale	A	H
9/7/10	Madison Triangular	A	H
9/7/10	Madison Triangular	A	H
9/7/10	Madison Triangular	A	H
9/9/10	O'Neill	H	A
9/11/10	Boone Central Tourn.	A	H
9/14/10	Laurel-Concord/Coleridge	A	H
9/16/10	Randolph	H	A
9/21/10	Plainview	H	A
9/23/10	Wisner-Pilger Triangular	A	H
9/23/10	Wisner-Pilger Triangular	A	H
9/25/10	Norfolk Catholic Tri.	A	H
9/25/10	Norfolk Catholic Tri.	A	H
9/25/10	Norfolk Catholic Tri.	A	H
9/28/10	Lutheran High Northeast	A	H
9/30/10	West Holt	A	H
10/7/10	Wayne	A	H
10/12/10	Creighton	H	A
10/14/10	Elkhorn Valley	H	A
10/18-10/19	Knox County Tour.	A	H
10/25-10/29	NENAC Tournament	A	H