

Bucks Look To Continue Climb Up Rankings

Football: Yankton Finished 7-4 In 2011

BY CHRIS RILEY
sports@yankton.net

After back-to-back six-win seasons, the Yankton Bucks took a step forward last fall, posting a 7-4 record, their best effort since they ended the 2007 season at 8-3.

With a contingent of experienced players returning this year, another above .500 season seems within grasp, but the Bucks will have to battle their way through an intimidating schedule to once again join the ranks of South Dakota's elite 11AA football programs.

One of the biggest hurdles facing the Bucks, in what will be the last season of the current 11-man classification — with an 11AAA class being added for the state's eight largest schools, will be how to replace the over 1,500 yards of production from last year's team lost to the graduation of Connor Fitzsimmons. Fitzsimmons, who rushed for 790 yards, caught passes for 526 and returned kickoffs for another 270, accounted for 104 of Yankton's 282 total points scored last fall.

Bucks head coach Arlin Likness likes what he sees out of senior Chance James as a former backup with some varsity experience. Evan Schroeder (42 carries, 315 yards, 19 receptions, 261 yards) and James Hisek are also senior backs who will be asked to contribute

online

■ Join Chris Riley And The P&D Sports Staff For Live Chats During Every Bucks Game.
yankton.net

optimism heading into this season is the final offseason of polishing for senior quarterback Michael Rucker. Rucker, a pocket passer (he rushed for only six yards in '11), set new Yankton single-season passing records for completions (111), attempts (203), yards (1,552), as well as a new single-game record for passing yards with 315 against Huron in week two. Rucker is also less than 200 yards away from eclipsing Mike Stotz's career mark of 2,336.

Although far from perfect — he threw 12 interceptions against 10 touchdowns last season — Rucker's ability to challenge defenses in the passing game should allow the Bucks

running backs to find more open running lanes.

"He is definitely one of our leaders," Likness said of Rucker. "This season we are looking for an increased completion percentage and a decrease in interceptions."

Protecting Rucker in the pocket and providing holes for the backs will be an offensive line anchored by seniors Adam Spencer, Kellen Soulek, and Logan Van Winkle.

Yankton opens their season with a pair of Eastern South Dakota Conference road games before welcoming the Watertown Arrows to town for the home opener on Sept. 7.

The real challenge of the regular season will be the second half, as the Bucks travel on the road to take on defending state champion Sioux Falls Roosevelt and early-season 11AA top-five and ESD favorite Brandon Valley while also hosting Sioux Falls Washington in between those road trips.

"Brandon Valley has to be one of the favorites along with the Sioux Falls schools," Likness said. "We have to prove to ourselves that we want to get to that level."

As far as the goals for this 2012 Bucks squad; fairly simple. "We want to be the best team that we can be by playoffs," Likness said.

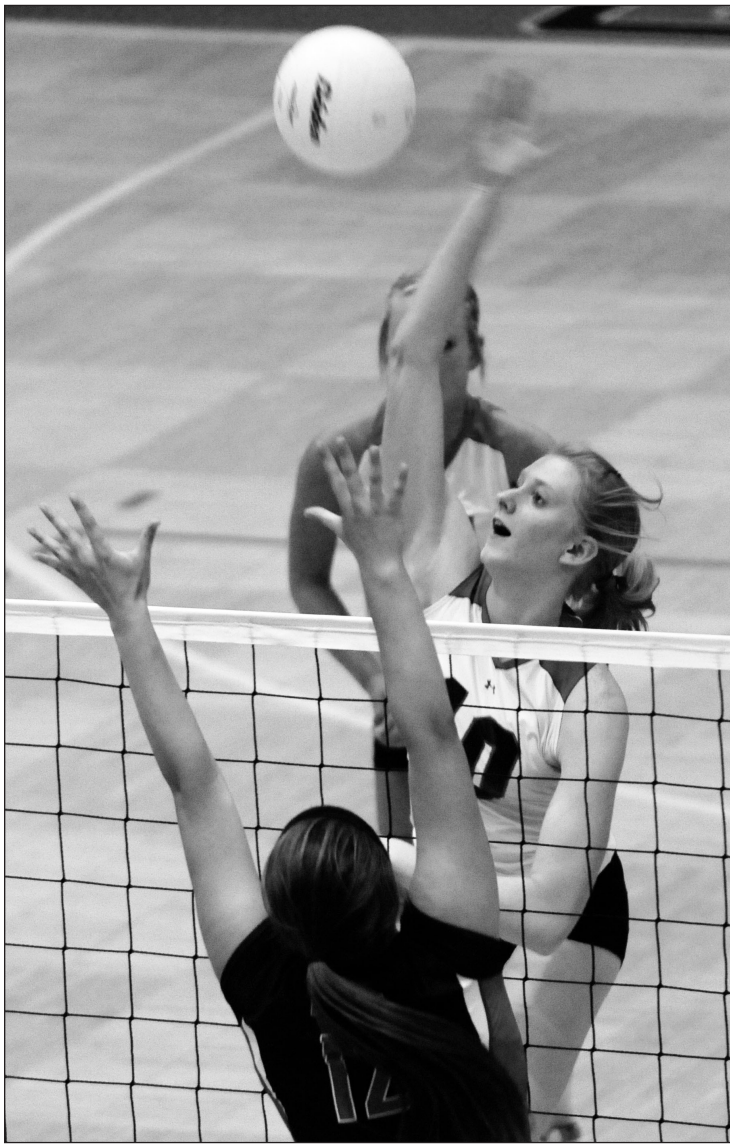
Because late October into November is when the games really count.

You can follow Chris Riley on Twitter at twitter.com/ChrisCRiley



BUCKS: Michael Rucker (16)

FRONT LINE ATTACK



GAZELLES: Mikala Hora (11) and Kelsey Fitzgerald (10)

Hitters Power Young Gazelles

Senior Sluggers Fitzgerald, Hora Return For An Otherwise Young Yankton Squad

BY JEREMY HOECK
jeremy.hoeck@yankton.net

Following the graduation of nine seniors, the Yankton Gazelles volleyball team turns its attention to a pair of power hitters to carry the torch.

And by the sounds of it, seniors Mikala Hora and Kelsey Fitzgerald are ready to do just that.

"We've got people who really want it," said Fitzgerald, a 6-foot outside hitter. "We know it'll be tough right away, with so many new girls, but we're fired up."

Yankton, coming off a 16-5 season a year ago, returns only two players with significant varsity experience — both on the front row. Also back from last year's varsity squad are Kelsey Butler (Sr.) and Brooke Wuebben (Jr.).

Between the varsity and JV rosters this season, Yankton boasts eight juniors, six seniors, two freshmen and one sophomore.

"In a lot of ways, it's starting from scratch," head coach Leasa Woodward said. "We'll have to piece things together a little bit. We'll have to be patient and see how the kids react."

Ultimately, how the Gazelles play around their two front-row sluggers will be the story of the season, Woodward said.

Hora, at 5-foot-11, is moving from outside hitter to the middle. A 2-time first team Class AA all-state selection, she led the state in kills per set (5.4) and ranked third in total kills (316) and hitting percentage (.331) as a junior.

Fitzgerald ranked fourth last year in kills per set (3.7) and seventh in total kills (234). Defen-

sively, she had the ninth-most blocks in Class AA with 51.

Woodward likened the situation to a football team having a great receiver, but needing a solid line and a quarterback to get them the ball.

"We have to find two touches before they can see the ball," she said. "That's our goal, to make sure we've got solid kids around them who can get it done."

Put another way, the two at the front row will have to adjust to new setters, Hora said.

"It'll be different, definitely, but we have a lot of hard-workers," she said. "We'll be all right."

With so many changes, the Gazelles might not be expected by opposing teams to make a run for a state tournament berth, Fitzgerald said.

"It's nice because nobody expects us to do anything," she said. "All the pressure is off us. We played tight last year, you could really tell."

When it comes to where the Gazelles fit into the Eastern South Dakota Conference (ESD) picture this fall, it's hard to tell. They saw Brookings, Huron and Mitchell in an ESD team camp over the summer. Woodward pointed to Aberdeen Central, last year's third-place finisher at the state tournament, as the league favorite.

Another change for the Gazelles comes on the sideline, as Tiffany Beste will serve as a

volunteer assistant. Beste, who teaches at Yankton Middle School, spent the last seven seasons as the head volleyball coach at Watertown.

Assistant coaches Amy Long, Carmen Robinson and Chris Hovden are also back.

When it comes to Yankton competing for the state tournament, it's not something they can go 'back' to. That's where the motivation lies this year, Hora said.

"It's our chance to be that team that slides into state," he said. "It always seems like there's one team every year that you don't expect to get there."

"That's going to be us."

You can follow Jeremy Hoeck on Twitter at twitter.com/jhoeck

Yankton Golfers Motivated After Sixth Place Finish In '11

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

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article originally appeared in the Aug. 13 edition of the Press & Dakotan. It has been updated to reflect the on-going season.

A sixth place finish in the South Dakota State Class AA Boys' Golf Tournament a year ago has been a motivating factor for the Yankton Bucks this off-sea-

son. With seven golfers with state tournament experience coming back for the Bucks, that isn't a surprise.

Yankton looked to build on that success as it began the 2012 campaign on Aug. 13 at the Lynx Invitational.

The Bucks strung together a fourth place finish in the Eastern South Dakota Conference, then finished sixth at state in 2012.

YHS GOLF | PAGE 3



BUCKS: Jace Guthmiller

Bloomfield Monitor
PO Box 367
110 N. Broadway
Bloomfield, NE
402-373-2332

Bloomfield Bees Football					
8/23	O'Neill St. Mary's	A	9/28	Creighton	A
8/31	Hartington	A	10/5	Elgin Pub./Pope John	H
9/7	Pender	H	10/12	Niobrara-Verdigre	Niobrara
9/21	Neligh-Oakdale	H	10/18	Plainview	H

Bloomfield Bees Volleyball					
9/4	Osmond	H	10/2	Lynch/Santee	Lynch
9/6	Allen/Wausa	H	10/4	Madison	A
9/10	Wausa	H	10/6	Randolph/Winside	Winside
9/13	Winside	H	10/9	Wynot	H
9/18	Hartington	H	10/11	West Boyd	A
9/20	Humphrey St. Francis	A	10/15-16	Knox Co. Tourn.	Crofton
9/27	Elkhorn Valley/Osmond	Tilden	10/22-26	Lewis & Clark Conf.	TBD

Good Samaritan Society
BLOOMFIELD
(402) 373-2531
300 N. Second St.
Bloomfield, NE
All faiths or beliefs are welcome. 10-G1775

Crofton Elevator, Inc.
Golden Sun & Purina Feeds, Fertilizer Chemicals
Crofton, NE
402-388-4377

YOUR NEWEST CHOICE FOR PHYSICAL THERAPY SERVICES
• STATE OF THE ART PRIVATE CLINIC • WE ACCEPT INSURANCE CO-PAYS
Michelle Tieszen, PT
Peloton Physical Therapy
1101 Broadway • Suite 115B
(Morgen Square)
605-260-5003
Matt Dvorak, PT
GOOD LUCK THIS SEASON TO THE CROFTON WARRIORS!

Let us "Brighten" your way!
Brightway Electric LLC Yankton
Locally owned * Proudly Serving South Dakota and Nebraska.
Licensed * Insured * Warrantied Work
Residential * Commercial * Service
Bucket Truck Available
**Mike Suing • 605-760-3505
Rod McNatt • 605-661-9594**

PEOPLE'S GROCERY & FLORAL
"Shur-fine Shur-fresh"
FULL-SERVICE GROCERY & FLORAL DEPTS.
Deli • Bakery • Fax • Dry Cleaning
All Major Credit Cards Accepted
1-402-388-4329 Crofton, Nebraska

Crofton Warriors Football					
8/31	Wisner-Pilger	A	9/28	Homer	A
9/7	Ponca	H	10/5	Lutheran High NE	H
9/14	Stanton	H	10/12	Battle Creek	A
9/21	Hart. Cedar Cath.	A	10/18	West Holt	H
Crofton Lady Warriors Volleyball					
8/30	Wynot Tourn.	Wynot	9/22	Norfolk Catholic/Lutheran	
9/4	Madison/HCC	H		High Northeast	Norfolk
9/6	O'Neill	H	9/25	Lutheran High NE	A
9/8	Boone Cent. Tourn.	Allbion	9/27	West Holt	A
9/11	Boone Central	A	10/4	Wayne	A
9/13	Pierce	A	10/9	Creighton	A
9/18	Laurel-Concord-Coleridge	A	10/11	Guardian Angels CC	H
9/20	Battle Creek/Wisner-Pilger	Battle Creek	10/15-16	Knox Co. Tourn.	Crofton
			10/22-26	Mid-State Conf.	
				Norfolk/Pierce	