



JEREMY HOECK/P&D

Members of the Yankton High School football team listen to head coach Arlin Likness, center, prior to Monday afternoon's practice at Williams Field. Yankton began preparations for the 2013 season on Thursday. The season opens Saturday, Aug. 31, at home against Mitchell.

Focus On Winning As Bucks Begin Preseason



JEREMY HOECK/P&D

Yankton High School football player Chris Brown, front, hauls in a pass in front of teammate Brady Hale during Monday afternoon's practice at Williams Field.

BY JEREMY HOECK

jeremy.hoeck@yankton.net

At one point early in Monday afternoon's practice, one of the assistant coaches told his group, "Mitchell is working harder than you right now."

The reference was clear: Kick it up a notch.

That's been the off-season and pre-season mantra for the Yankton High School football team, which opens its season Aug. 31 at home against Mitchell. After a 5-4 regular season (and another second-round playoff exit), the Bucks — with nearly 70 players at the start of fall camp — are focused on winning.

And winning now. "The kids just want it more, and they've worked harder to get it," senior J.J. Hejna said before Monday's practice at Williams Field. "They went to the gym on their own because they wanted to, not because the coaches said we needed to.

"I've gotten more push from my guys than from the coaches; they always get on you like, 'Why weren't you in the weight room today?' That's exactly what you want."

That participation in the weight room over the summer was another one of the big changes for this year's group, according to senior lineman Steven McKee. The Bucks underwent a new lifting program, and asked whether that will translate to the field, McKee's reply was simple.

"Oh yeah."

He added, "It makes you better as a

team; it helps in every aspect of the game, defense or offense. In the weight room is where you get faster and stronger, so when you get on the field, you're ready to go."

So far during preseason practices — Monday's marked the sixth — the mood has improved drastically from where it was a year ago, head coach Arlin Likness said. He specifically used the terms "attitude" and "work ethic."

"If you come to work and are committed to getting better, it's amazing what you can do," the veteran coach said. "We're not where we want to be, but we're practicing hard every day."

Another one of the consistent themes at Monday's practice? The new seventh class of football in South Dakota, Class 11AAA.

The new playoff division includes the state's eight largest schools, which are all four Sioux Falls schools, both Rapid City schools, as well as Aberdeen Central and Brandon Valley.

Yankton now assumes the mantle as one of the largest schools in the next grouping, Class 11AA — along with fellow Eastern South Dakota Conference (ESD) rivals Brookings, Huron, Mitchell, Pierre, Watertown and newcomer Harrisburg.

Conceivably, the Bucks and those other AA teams have a better shot at a state title, with the Sioux Falls teams out of the way. And yes, that's a motivation, McKee said.

"We want to get far in the playoffs and maybe get in the dome," he said, referring to the DakotaDome, site of the

state championships. "One of the big things this year is we want to beat a Sioux Falls team; and O'Gorman is on our schedule. That's something in every one of us."

A quirk in that schedule, though, still has Yankton playing a tough slate.

Aberdeen Central, for example, plays three AAA games, while the Sioux Falls and Rapid City schools all play five.

Yankton, by comparison, plays four AAA games — Rapid City Stevens (Sept. 6), Brandon Valley (Sept. 13), Aberdeen Central (Sept. 20) and Sioux Falls O'Gorman (Sept. 27).

As a kind of double-edged sword, the Bucks will still avoid the larger schools in the playoffs, but have to beat them in the regular season to still boast a good seed for the AA playoffs.

While Yankton doesn't have to worry about that until the second game, the players are still using the AAA/AA divide as motivation, according to Hejna.

"I think it changes our mindset on those few games we do get to play an upper opponent," said Hejna, the top returning receiver. He caught 11 passes for 186 yards a year ago. "People might think they're better, but we still have them on our schedule."

"We need to do what we need to." Part of that checklist includes aiming for a state championship, regardless of classification, according to junior Levi Davis.

"We're tired of hearing about Sioux

BUCKS | PAGE 9

Yankton Golfers Open Season With BV Invite Win

BRANDON — The Yankton Bucks boys' golf team put three golfers in the top 10 and had five golfers under 80 in winning the nine-team Brandon Valley Invitational golf tournament, held on Monday at the Brandon Municipal Golf Course.

The Brandon Golf Course will host the S.D. State Class AA Boys' Golf Championships Oct. 7-8.

Yankton shot a 293, three strokes better than Sioux Falls O'Gorman. Brandon Valley (305), Aberdeen Central (312) and Watertown (313) rounded out the top five.

Yankton's Jace Guthmiller won a scorecard playoff over O'Gorman's Max Donohue for medalist honors. The junior

secured the victory with a tournament-low 33 on the back nine.

Also for Yankton, Brandon Frick (75) placed fourth, Lane Sawatzke (75) tied for ninth, Logan Megard (77) tied for 14th, Ben Jensen (78) tied for 17th and Mitch Schlingman (85) tied for 34th.

Yankton is off until a dual at Brandon Valley on Tuesday, Aug. 27.

TEAM SCORES: Yankton 293, Sioux Falls O'Gorman 305, Aberdeen Central 312, Watertown 313, Harrisburg 322, Mitchell 324, Huron 333, Brookings 347

TOP 15: Jace Guthmiller, Yankton 68 (won on scorecard playoff); Max Donohue, O'Gorman 68; Ethan Smith, Watertown 71; Brandon Frick, Yankton 73; Jacob Rice, Mitchell 74; Greg Koehn, Brandon Valley 74; Riley Dunsanson, Brandon Valley 74; Connor Preston, Aberdeen Central 74; Lane Sawatzke, Yankton 75; Ben Rogers, O'Gorman 75; Jaron Welch, Mitchell 75; Cade McLaughlin, Harrisburg 75; Jacob Otta, O'Gorman 76; Logan Megard, Yankton 77; Chris Gaher, O'Gorman 77; Cole Peterson, Huron 77

OTHER YHS: 117, Ben Jensen 78; 134, Mitch Schlingman 85

West Central Early Bird

HARTFORD — The Parkston Trojans put two golfers in the top five and four in the top 12 to claim a nine-stroke victory in the 16-team West Central Early Bird Golf Tournament, held Monday at Central Valley Golf Course in Hartford.

The event was held on the course that will host the S.D. State Class A Boys' Golf Championships in October.

Parkston finished at 316, beating out Dell Rapids (325) and Madison (338). Dakota Valley (348) and Vermillion (349) rounded out the top five.

Dylan From of West Cen-

GOLF | PAGE 9



SUBMITTED PHOTO/KAMI GUTHMILLER

The Yankton Bucks boys' golf team took top honors at the season-opening Brandon Valley Invitational on Monday at the Brandon Municipal Golf Course. Team members include (left) Logan Megard, Brandon Frick, Ben Jensen, Jace Guthmiller, Lane Sawatzke, Mitch Schlingman and Coach Brett Sime.

NCAA Reverses Course On Marine Playing At Middle Tennessee

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. (AP) — The NCAA has ruled that a Middle Tennessee football player who spent five years in the Marines will be allowed to compete this fall and that he will have four years of eligibility remaining.

It's a reversal from the NCAA's earlier decision to rule Steven Rhodes was ineligible because he played in a recreational league during his military service. School officials had said earlier Monday that they were working with NCAA officials to come up with a solution.

"It's nothing but a blessing," Rhodes said after Monday's practice.

Late Monday afternoon, the NCAA issued a news release saying Rhodes could play immediately and member schools would continue to re-examine the competition rules, especially as it impacts those returning from military service. Rhodes has

been practicing at tight end and defensive end.

"We thank Steven for his service to our country and wish him the best as he begins college," NCAA vice president of academic and membership affairs Kevin Lennon said.

Before the ruling came down, Middle Tennessee President Sidney McPhee said it was a "no brainer" to allow Rhodes to play. After learning of the decision, McPhee thanked the NCAA.

"This is exciting news for Steven and Middle Tennessee State University," McPhee said in a statement. "We express our gratitude to the NCAA for reviewing this situation and granting Steven the ability to play this fall. We are hopeful that the NCAA will look at the bylaws regarding all individuals who serve in the military before becoming a student-athlete."

Middle Tennessee athletic

director Chris Massaro said he and McPhee went to the practice field Monday afternoon to inform Rhodes of the NCAA's decision.

"It was really a neat moment to be there for that," Massaro said. "He was extremely happy, as you'd imagine. It's always fun to be there when dreams start to come true."

Rhodes' eligibility was in question because he played in a recreational league during his military service. An NCAA rule states that student-athletes who don't enroll in college within a year of graduating high school will be charged one year of eligibility for every academic year they participate in organized competition.

By NCAA standards, Rhodes' play at the Marine base counted as "organized competition" because there were game officials, team uniforms and the score was kept.

But the 6-foot-3, 240-pound Marine sergeant said the recreational league was nothing close to organized.

"Man, it was like intramurals for us," the 24-year-old told The (Murfreesboro) Daily News Journal, which first reported the story. "There were guys out there anywhere from 18 to 40-something years old. The games were spread out. We once went six weeks between games."

The rule first took shape in 1980, when "participation in organized competition during times spent in the armed services, on official church missions or with recognized foreign aid services of the U.S. government" was exempt from limiting eligibility.

But through several revisions and branches of the rule, the clause allowing com-

MARINE | PAGE 9

Court Allows Scholarship Case Against NCAA To Proceed

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — The NCAA has lost another court round, this time over scholarships.

U.S. District Court Judge Jane Magnus-Stinson rejected the governing body's motion to dismiss a case brought by former college football player John Rock.

NCAA lawyers contended Rock's case should be thrown out because he could not show one-year scholarships or scholarship limits on football teams in the Football Bowl Subdivision and Football Championship Subdivision created an anti-competitive effect.

In a 27-page ruling issued Friday by the Southern District of Indiana, Magnus-Stinson wrote that, by law, she

was accepting Rock's arguments as truthful and could not find anything in the NCAA's arguments to prevent the case from going to trial. Magnus-Stinson did, however, acknowledge that the standard of proof would be exceedingly higher for Rock — if the case actually is heard in a courtroom.

Rock claims that after playing three seasons of college football at Gardner-Webb, the new football coaching staff refused to renew his scholarship in July 2011. The team captain and starting quarterback said he then had to pay thousands of dollars out of his own pocket to earn a political science degree. The NCAA

NCAA | PAGE 9