

# Gazelles Look To Build On 16-Win Season



GAZELLES | EMILY FEDDERS

BY CODY BALL  
sports@yankton.net

The Yankton Gazelles girls' basketball team is hoping to improve on last year's 16-10 overall record with an 11-3 conference record, which was good enough for a second place finish in the Eastern South Dakota Conference.

A roster loaded with eight seniors, and returning 71 percent of their offensive output will play a major factor in improving on last season's record. Last year's Gazelles' squad averaged 49.1 points-per-game. Of those 49.1 points-per-game 35.2 points-per-game were averaged by players who will be on this season's team.

The returners expected to lead Yankton this year include SDSU record Chloe Cornemann (Sr., 7 ppg, 5 apg), Dakota State recruit Emily Fedders (Sr., 13 ppg, 4.2 rpg), Mikala Hora (Jr., 7.2 ppg, 6.1 rpg), Jenn Granflaten (Sr., 4 ppg, 2 apg), Sarah Ekeren (Sr., 2 ppg, 2 rpg) and Kelsey Fitzgerald (Jr., 2 ppg, 2 rpg).

Other Gazelles expected to make contributions this season are seniors Audrey Fuks, Tory Gross, Courtney True, and Vanessa Rockne, juniors Kelsey Butler, Jessica Wirth, and Abbie Mitchell, and sophomores Morgan Tessier, Whitlee Larson.

Head coach Doug Pesicka, who is in his 19th season as the head coach of Yankton girls' bas-

ketball, listed the strengths of this season's Gazelles.

"We have good athleticism, decent size, good ball handling, versatile players, and experience."

Despite bringing back experience, the Gazelles plan to change a few things around this season.

"We hope to be up-tempo this year," Pesicka said. Pesicka also stated that the Gazelles will play a "variety of defenses" throughout the season. Last season's version of the Gazelles held opponents to only 46.9 points-per-game.

Turning up the tempo should bring up the Gazelle's scoring average as long as the Gazelles follow Pesicka's keys to a successful season.

"Our keys to a successful season are improving perimeter shooting, having the ability to rebound and defend, being consistent, and accepting roles," Pesicka said.

Yankton will open their season on Dec. 9 hosting an ESD Conference game against Brookings.

Pesicka commented on the Gazelles 2011-12 schedule.

"We have a very difficult conference schedule along with a very tough non-conference schedule," Pesicka said. "Our district and region will also be very good."

Assistant coaches for Yankton are Amy Long, Marc Bies and Heather Olson.



BUCKS | CONNOR VLASMAN

# Gazelles Aim To Build On Ninth Place Finish

BY JEREMY HOECK  
jeremy.hoeck@yankton.net

*EDITOR'S NOTE: This article originally appeared in the Nov. 28 edition of the Press & Dakotan. It has been updated with statistics current as of Dec. 5, 2011.*

After jumping three places in the state meet, the Yankton-Bon Homme gymnastics team is no doubt optimistic, yet far from satisfied.

The ninth-place finish last season was nice, but it was only the first step in the overall progression, according to head coach Luke Youmans.

"We've really moved in the right direction," said Youmans, whose team finished second in a season-opening triangular with Sioux Falls Washington and Mitchell and finished eighth at the Lolly Forseth Invite (Dec. 3).

"Our goal is to just get better; keep improving from year to year.

"We don't want to have that one year of great gains and then a let-down," he added. "We want to see that steady improvement."

Taking on that continued progression for the Gazelles will be another young roster, with no seniors. Leading the way will be

junior Charlotte Taggart, while Ashtyn Haak (So.), Elsie Kotalik (So.) and Lindsay Larson (Fr.) also return for Yankton.

"It's nice to be working with a young group like this," Youmans said. "The good thing is we'll have them here for quite a while, it isn't just all upperclassmen on their way out.

"They'll be able to spend quite a few years in the competitive level."

Many of the athletes on this year's roster have come up through Yankton's club program, River City Gymnastics, which is why they are already seasoned and experienced for still being so young, Youmans said.

Also on the roster this year are Alisa Ruzicka (So.), Miranda Hallberg (So.), Elizabeth Rust (Fr.), Kendall Lillie (Fr.), Meagan Eilers (Fr.), Payton Pierce (8th), Alexis Petersen (8th), Sophie Bisgard (7th), Haleigh Diede (7th), Kaitlin Guthmiller (7th) and Ellie Hiltunen (7th).

Put another way, Yankton

could potentially get six years of varsity experience from the current seventh-graders.

"With most other programs, you won't see many seventh-graders prepared, so that's where our sport is unique," Youmans said. "It's fun to see them coming in as youngsters and watching their growth and development."

As the team's eldest member, Taggart will assume the leadership role for the Gazelles this season. The junior will be counted on to share her experience and lead by example, Youmans said.

"She really isn't a lead-by-words person, but she has the ability to lead by action," he said. "She's a really hard-worker, and it's contagious when you're around her. Whether you like or not, sometimes you inherit that position of being that go-to person.



GAZELLES | CHARLOTTE TAGGART

GYMNASTICS | PAGE 4A

# Gross Look To Improve On Sixth Place Finish In ESD

BY TYLER SMIT  
sports@yankton.net

In the history of Bucks Basketball, Yankton has taken home the championship trophy nine times; the first championship coming from the 1922 season and the most recent championship from the 1978 campaign. The Bucks have also taken home runner-up honors eight times over its existence in South Dakota Basketball. History is there, and the Bucks aim to get back into winning form.

The 2011-2012 season is once again under the leadership of coach Randy Gross. This season will mark the 10th year that Gross has served as the Bucks head coach — bringing with him a 93-114 record over the course

of his Yankton Basketball career. Assisting in coaching duties this year are Arlin Likness, Chris Haynes and Adam Tyhurst.

Last year, the Bucks finished the season with a 7-15 record and a conference record of 5-9, which put them sixth in the league.

On paper, the Bucks face an uphill battle this year with the team losing seven seniors, four of which were starters. The starters lost to graduation include Cole Drotzmann, Tyler Sternhagen, Dylan Tacke, and Cody Ulmer. The senior reserves that graduated are Devin Gullikson, Zach Nolz and Josh Teichroew. Gross says that all of last year's seniors are now in college.

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