

New Bucks Mentor Ready For The Challenge

BY JEREMY HOECK
jeremy.hoeck@yankton.net

The jump from being an assistant coach to a head coach often times is a study in patience and organization.

Chris Haynes, the new head coach for the Yankton High School boys' basketball team, found that out right away.

"There's a lot to this job. It seems like every day there's something to do. But hey, I don't mind one bit," Haynes said after a pre-season practice at the YHS gym. Prior to posing for photos and conducting an interview, he was running up and down the court, instructing players, talking with assistant coaches and gathering paperwork.

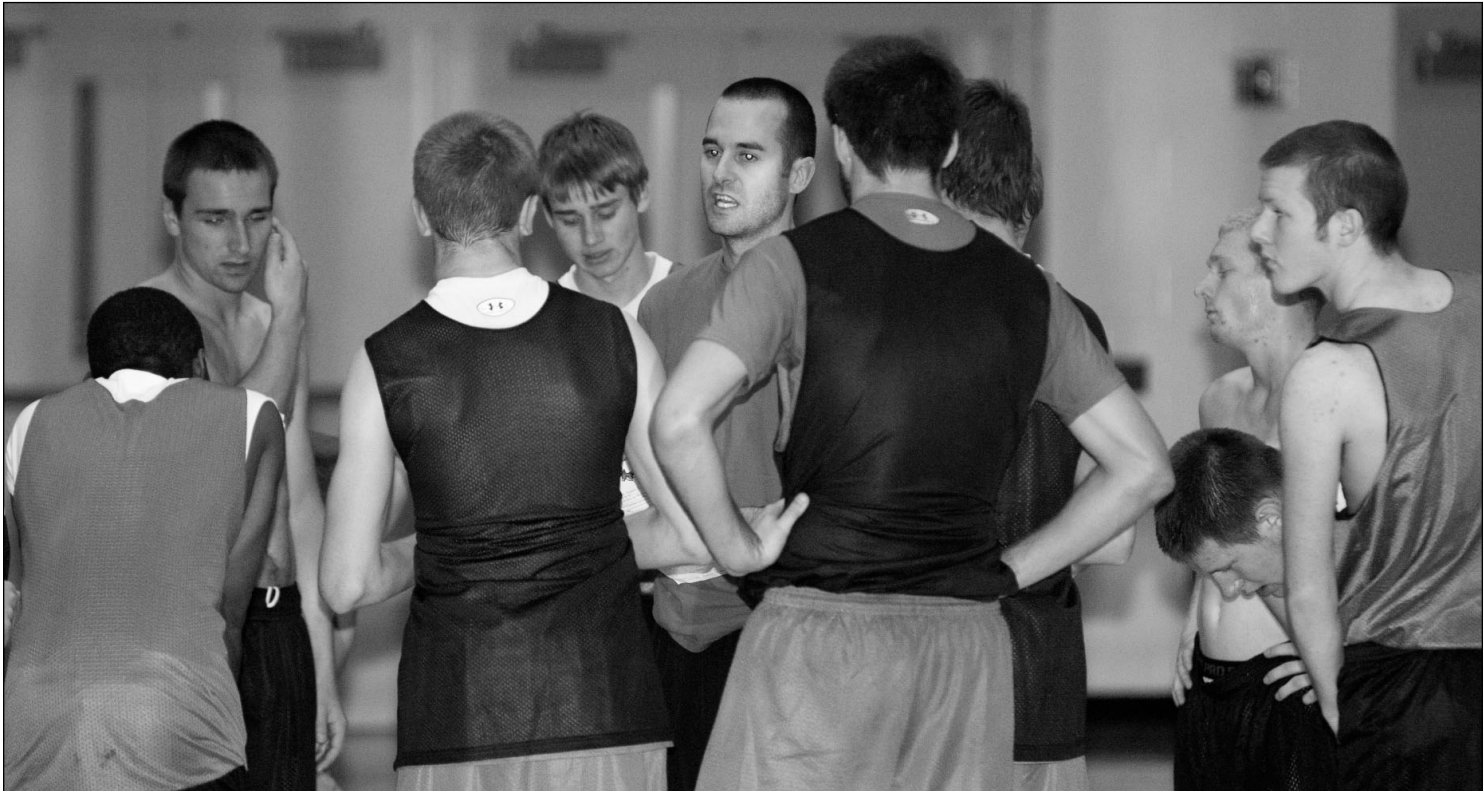
"This is what I wanted," he added. "I'm looking forward to even more stuff being thrown at me."

Meet Chris Haynes.

Though at age 29, Haynes is no stranger to the game of basketball, having not only played alongside some of the state's most notable names but coached alongside some of those figures.

A 2002 graduate of Winner High School and 2006 alumnus of Dakota Wesleyan University, Haynes has worked his way up the coaching ladder in a short period of time. He later spent two seasons as a graduate assistant with the Mount Marty College men's program before coming to YHS in 2009 — spending two years as the freshman coach and last season as the sophomore coach.

That resume includes stints as a player under legendary Winner coach Jim Drake, DWU coach Doug Martin and Mount Marty coach Jim Thorson. Haynes then linked up with Randy Gross, who resigned in April after 10 years —



Yankton head boys' basketball coach Chris Haynes, center facing, addresses his team during a recent practice. The former Dakota Wesleyan and Winner High School standout, who has been in the Yankton boys' basketball program the past three seasons, began his first season as head coach of the Bucks on Nov. 27 when practice opened. The Bucks host Watertown today (Friday) in the season opener.

27 overall — as the Yankton boys' head coach.

"When you talk about Yankton boys' basketball, it's hard to think about it without Randy Gross," Haynes said. "He was a staple of this program for so long, going all the way back to a player. We're grateful that he stayed on for the feeder program (middle school) level."

"He's been a mentor to me for a few years, and he's been so helpful throughout this process."

And so, Haynes is now the man in charge of the program. He inherits a team that graduated five senior starters from last sea-

son's 4-18 record — although Yankton came one win shy of the state tournament.

His philosophy is not all that much different than Gross' was, but his players admit that they knew things were going to be different with Haynes in charge. So much so that one player joked that they "didn't even touch a ball for the first week."

"I knew right away that we would be working harder, that nothing would be easy," senior guard Andrew Hummel said. "He's always wanted to keep us involved, keep us going and pushing ourselves."

Aside from more intense practices, Haynes has made it a priority to engage the younger levels of Yankton basketball. YHS hosted a camp for grades 2-8 that began in mid-November, all the with the idea of teaching them fundamental skills.

The idea, not just to build the program from the bottom up for future seasons, is to develop a winning culture, according to senior guard Michael Rucker.

"It'll pay off big time for us," Rucker said of Haynes' philosophy. "We just want to win. Winning makes everything more fun."

"When you're not winning, the

game isn't all that fun."

For a program that hasn't qualified for the state tournament since 2008, that mindset should eventually help, Rucker added. Yankton has also not won a first round game at state since 1981.

"You can tell he really wants to turn this thing around. He wants it to happen now," Rucker said. "And that's what we all want, too."

Though there naturally been some speed bumps along the way since taking the job, Haynes admits he has stayed "level-headed" with all the responsibilities. Hav-

Chris Haynes

BORN: July 18, 1983, Winner

FAMILY: Wife, Ashley; son, Cooper

EDUCATION: Winner High School (2002), Dakota Wesleyan (2006)

EXPERIENCE: Mount Marty College graduate assistant (2007-08), Yankton freshman coach (2009-10), Yankton sophomore coach (2011)

ing spent three years in the program with Gross obviously prepared him for the job, but at the end of the day, Haynes is determined to leave his own mark.

"All coaches are different. There will be some differences, but overall, coach Gross and I have the same ideas," Haynes said. "We will try to be a little more aggressive defensively."

"I respect coach Gross and he did a great job, but I have to be my own person and try my own things."

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

Inexperienced Bucks Squad Looks To Exceed Expectations



BUCKS: Michael Rucker (10)

Expectations may be low for the Yankton Bucks basketball team, but make no mistake, the players don't mind it that way.

"People are not going to expect anything great from us, because we're all new starters and we have a new coach," senior guard Michael Rucker said.

By virtue of graduating five senior starters from last season's 4-18 squad, the Bucks had to develop some depth and find new ways to get the ball in the hoop for first-year coach Chris Haynes.

As it stood a few days into pre-season practices, Yankton had 13 players competing for varsity minutes — a group that included seniors, juniors and a few sophomores. In other words, lineups will vary for the Bucks.

"It can change, definitely," Haynes said. "I told the guys

coming in that everyone was on an equal playing field. The guys are the ones who determine who plays, not the coaches."

Just how new to key roles are these Bucks?

In last season's region final loss at Brookings, the quartet of Rucker, J.J. Hejna (Jr.), Zach Benjamin (Sr.) and Kellen Soulek (Sr.) combined to go 4-of-10 from the field with 10 points.

One of the common traits among the players who figure to see the court this season, though, is size. Yankton boasts a strong front line of Hejna, Soulek and Troy Hunhoff (Sr.), which though is not very tall, present advantages.

"When you look around, we're going to be one of the shortest teams in the state, if not the shortest one," Haynes said. "Hopefully our strength can match that."

"It's an interesting combina-

tion, because we can use different lineups when we need to."

Also on the varsity roster are Sam Wendte (Sr.), Chipper Granflaten (Jr.), Tanner Termansen (Jr.), Derek Brenner (Jr.), Mitch Gullikson (Jr.), Colton Frohreich (Jr.), Lane Sawatzke (Jr.), Landon Green (Jr.), Ryan Olson (Jr.) and Brady Hale (So.). Of course, no matter who steps on the floor for Yankton in the first handful of games this season, improvement is ultimately the name of the game.

"The team we are in Novem-

ber and December hopefully is a lot different than the one we see in March," Haynes said. "That's what we're really keying on, what we're working toward."

To that end, a back-loaded home portion of the schedule figures to help the Bucks. Yankton closes the regular season with five of six games at the Summit Center — the finale against Mitchell, the two-time defending Class AA runner-up.

Jim & Pam Cunningham, Owners

AFFORDABLE SELF STORAGE

FREE Truck & Driver With Move-In

On-Site Manager • Security Gate Fenced Facility • Overhead Doors Lighted • 7 Different Sizes Available

605-665-4207

1501 West City Limits Rd • Yankton, SD

Mead Lumber

YHS HomeTown Lumber Yard Since 1910

New Year... New Name... New Look!

formerly Fullerton Lumber

2409 Broadway, Yankton

605-665-9651

JB Auto Body

1906 E. Hwy 50

665-1280

Shreves Law Office

Brian J. Shreves Attorney at Law

• Criminal Law • Family Law • Social Security Disability • Personal Injury • Trusts & Wills

Office: 605-665-2535 Mobile: 605-215-11AW 806 Belfast, Yankton brianjs711@gmail.com

Stewart Carpet Center

1803 Broadway Yankton, SD Ph. 605-665-7183

Carpet and Hard Surface Flooring

CONCRETE MATERIALS

DIV OF SWEETMAN CONST.

2210 Alumax Rd Yankton, SD 665-3838

WINTZ & RAY FUNERAL HOME

and Cremation Service, Inc.

Garden of Memories Cemetery

Yankton • 605-665-3644

www.wintzrayfuneralhome.com

BONANZA Steakhouse

N. Hwy. 81, Yankton 665-6394

HOURS: Sun.-Thurs. 11am-9pm • Fri. & Sat. 11am-10pm

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 Suling • 605-760-3505 Rod McNatt • 605-661-9594

UTICA GRAIN INC

PO Box 6 Utica, SD 605-665-0589

State Farm

Insurance • Mutual Funds • State Farm Bank

Rhonda Wesseln

www.rhondainsuresyou.com

1023 W. 9th St., Yankton 665-4411

SHEBOYGAN SAUSAGE COMPANY

Old World Recipe • Old World Flavor

Naturally Good Sausage

America's Tradition Since 1933

1000 Cattle Dr., Yankton, SD (605) 665-1665

PUT A SPRING IN YOUR STEP

Fresh air and sunshine - just what the doctor ordered.

Terence Pedersen, DPM

Specializing in:

- Surgery and Reconstruction
- Sprains and tendonitis
- Sports medicine
- Bunions, hammertoes and heel spurs
- Diabetic shoes and prescription inserts

Avera Medical Group Podiatry Yankton

Call (605) 668-8601 or toll-free (877) 256-8973 to schedule an appointment and see if surgery is right for you.