

Veteran Bucks Wrestling Squad Looks To Raise Bar

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK
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With seven returning state qualifiers and eight seniors in the practice room, the Yankton High School wrestling team has high expectations for its 2012-13 campaign.

The Bucks return three seniors who wrestled at state a year ago: James Hisek, C.J. Warren and Thomas Kruse. Also back are Robbie Borgstrom, Matt Huber, Talon Nieman, Royce Reisner and Ryan Schiltz.

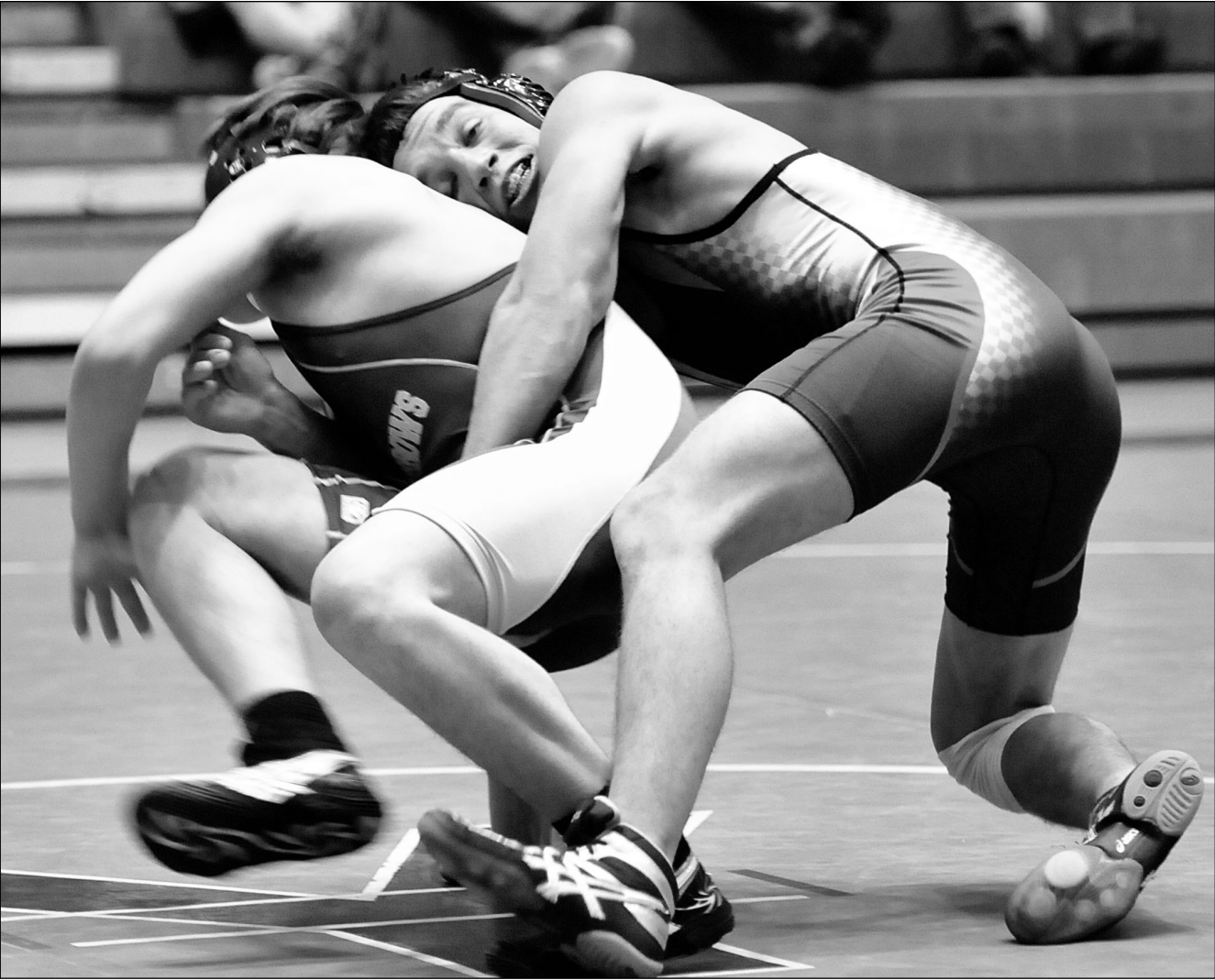
"We have a big group of seniors, and they know what I expect," said Yankton head coach Ryan Hage. "They've been working very hard."

"We've got a nice big group of young kids, and they've been working just as hard as the seniors. Our younger kids are feeding of what the seniors are doing."

Leading that group of underclassmen is the Bucks' lone returning state placewinner from a year ago, Casey Skillingstad (6th at 132). Sophomores Levi Davis and Mason Strahl, and freshman Spencer Huber also return with state tournament experience.

Also back are juniors Cody Hanzlik and Ty Novak, and sophomores Dakota Borgstrom, Dylan Borgstrom and Michael Montoya.

Yankton also has a number of freshmen in the practice room, many of which were there as eighth graders a year ago: Bashir Abd-Al-Kreem, Jamee Bruegman, Robert Darcy, Skylar Elle, Brock Folkers, Sheldon Gant, Zach Hanzlik, Morgan Hill, Jordan Lucht, Colin Muth, Kenneth Ohrzda, Hunter Ryan, Skyler Schick, Ryan Sternhagen, Sam Stewart, Noah Vetter and Cody Vornhagen. Eighth grader Gabe Wenzlaff and seventh grader Ray Wermers are also practicing with the varsity and JV.



BUCKS: Matt Huber (right)

"We have better numbers than we've had in past years," Hage said. "Last year we had about the same, but that was because we had 16 or 17 eighth graders practicing with us."

Despite good numbers, the Bucks will still have holes to fill.

"We have a lot of guys from 138 to 152 (pounds), but at 120 and 126 we're

pretty light (on numbers)," Hage said. "The 182-pound class is also light. But things will shake themselves out as the season progresses."

Facing Huron right away will be a tough test for the Bucks, who had opened with Sioux Falls Washington in recent years.

"It is atypical for us, starting with an

ESD opponent," Hage said. "Starting with an ESD opponent the caliber of Huron has meant things have been a little more intense in practice."

The Bucks faced Washington as part of a quadrangular including Sioux Falls Lincoln and Lennox on Dec. 4. The Bucks-Brookings dual on Dec. 18 is now a triangular including Harrisburg, meaning the Bucks will have wrestled 15 duals (including four at the Watertown Dual Tournament and five at the Yankton Dual Tournament) and a regular tournament-style event on Dec. 15 before they hit the Christmas break.

"The nice thing about that is the 'January grind,' where we would traditionally go the entire month without a real break from weigh-ins or matches, has a couple breaks in there because of our front-loaded schedule," Hage said.

"There will be some time in January to get healthy, if we need to, and get ourselves back to 100 percent and firing on all cylinders before the February push."

The Bucks started ESD action with one of the tougher teams in Huron, dropping a 63-15 decision to the Tigers. They finish it with two of the toughest — Pierre and Aberdeen Central — on back-to-back nights, Jan. 31 and Feb. 1. Pierre topped Yankton 75-3 on the way to winning the Watertown Dual Tournament on Saturday. Aberdeen Central, which finished third in that event, beat Yankton 55-18.

"Pierre is the front-runner. It's between them and Rapid City Central for the state title. They're both loaded from top to bottom," Hage said. "After Pierre (in the ESD), it's a race to see who will be second. Huron is strong. Aberdeen Central has great numbers. Brookings is a team I think people will be underestimating, but they will be good this year and for years to come."

With the Bucks' veteran lineup, Hage expects his team to be in that fight as well.

"If we get the ball rolling and keep everyone healthy, we should be competitive this season," he said.

(Yankton was 0-5 after the Watertown Dual Tournament, and competed in the Washington Quad after this section went to press.)

You can follow James D. Cimburek on Twitter at twitter.com/aceman904

Bucks Hockey Team Aims For Solid Season



BUCKS: Logan Van Winkle (left)

BY NICK ROBINSON
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This winter the Yankton Bucks hockey team will focus on playing together and more as a unit than in seasons past. The key to success for Yankton will be determined by the leaders of the squad and the overall health of the team.

Even though the hockey team has had its lows the past years, the future is looking bright.

"I expect us (the Yankton Bucks) to be over .500 this season," senior Logan Van Winkle said. "We want to be remembered as a team that could win games and a team people cared about. Our coaches (Mike Stoll and Josh Engquist) are really working us hard so far."

The seniors on this years team boast at least three years of junior varsity experience under their belts.

Last year, the Bucks had a Varsity squad, but due to lack of numbers they decided to only put a Junior Varsity team on the rink this season.

"(It last year) was definitely a learning experience," Van Winkle said. "We were playing at a high, fast-pace level of hockey. So far, it has really helped us out so far this season."

The Bucks will be led by four seniors: Tyler Johnson, Tyler Stoll, Adam Spencer and Logan Van Winkle, who will also be the teams captains.

"I feel like we can really go to anyone to be our go to players," head coach Mike Stoll said. "We're going to need our seniors to be leaders."

Not only will the Bucks be leaning on veteran play, they will need the underclassmen to step up and take a role into the team.

"We (as upperclassmen) need

to show the underclassmen what it takes to play at this level," Spencer said. "Make a strong foundation and spread it down to the younger guys."

With younger players on a team, growing pains should be expected.

"You play like you practice, and you practice like you play," Spencer said. "The harder we go, the more ready we will be."

Yankton lost some key seniors from last year's squad: Austin Davis, Dawson Johnson, Andrew

Kotalik and Lukas Treftz.

Yankton also lost two players who had key minutes because they moved out of town.

"We lost a few key players from last years team," Stoll said. "But, this team is good on the skates. We're going to play a lot better as a unit."

An injury plagued front line is the Achilles' heel for this veteran Bucks squad.

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