

Young Miracle Ready To Take The Ice

BY NICK ROBINSON
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After a 2011-2012 campaign that ended with a respectful sixth place at the state tournament, the Yankton Miracle girls' hockey team will turn their focus to not placing in a tournament, but on getting back to the fundamentals.

The Miracle lost seven key seniors from last year's squad (McKayla Bouska, Dani Gill, Hope Logue, Kirsten Monaghan, Kendra Nelsen, and Alysha Watzel) who have played hockey since Yankton got a girls hockey team several years ago.

This year, Yankton will put out an entirely new team on the rink this winter; 12 of whom have one year of hockey experience or less.

Head coach Mike Freeman has optimism going into this mysterious season ahead for the Miracle.

"The girls have a desire to get better," he said. "The improvement from the start of the season to now is huge. They went from not knowing any hockey to getting a hold of it."

Yankton will be led by the two lone seniors on the roster: Helena Pokorny and Iesley Stone.

"Going to practice we have to help explain the game with little to no game experience for them," Pokorny said. "We're used to being quiet but this year we have to step up and be leaders; teach what we've been taught."

Even though the Miracle have



MIRACLE: Helena Pokorny (right)



TANAGERS: Mackenzie Huber (44)

Tanager Girls Aim To Build On State Tourney Appearance

Young Vermillion Squad Aims For Return Trip

BY EMILY NIEBRUGGE
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As the defending district and region champions, the Vermillion Tanagers are looking ahead with a new team to continue their success.

Senior Mackenzie Huber is hoping this will be a strength for her team.

"We're really quite young and there will be a learning curve at first," she said. "We only have six girls who have even been on varsity before and only one of them with starting experience. But I think everybody is ready to step up."

"Everyone will have a new role this year, but that's one thing I think will be our strength. We are a really close group of girls who all know our roles on the team."

Head coach Nick Mayer knows the expectations to do well are relevant, but is focusing on getting the new players in new spots.

"We're still making adjustments with different kids filling spots and figuring out what role each kid is going to play," he said. "We do have a few kids returning from last year, and we're expect those kids to be our leaders of the season and help everybody else fall into their roles to have a successful year."

In preparation for the season, the Tanagers worked on their skills individually over the summer in order to come together as a team in November. Mayer said

players spent time in the gym and the weight room over the summer so November has been focused on conditioning and playing together.

Mayer will also look to the seniors, as well as the younger members of the team, to step up this year.

"We're looking forward to having a bunch of kids that work hard, that are very cerebral in the game of basketball, kids that have been around the game for a long time and understand how the game works and also our system for a number of years as well," he said. "They've done a nice job here for the first six practices we've had."

As far as improving from last season, Mayer said his team will focus on attacking the basket and shooting the ball from the outside more.

"Our expectations are that we'd like to play in another district champion game," he said. "The expectations from last season are still there, but this is a new team so we want to look forward to the future with them. We were obviously very successful last year, and we'd like to continue that success as we go on this year."

The Tanagers will face Harrisburg, third in the preseason rankings, for their first game of the season, and Mayer said the players are ready to start.

"We want to see where we're at with that first game. Harrisburg is good team and very well coached," he said. "They're big across the front line and they've got quick guards. It gets to be to the point where we're tired of practicing against each other,

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little experience, they are not using it as an excuse to lose games this season.

"So far we have been giving it everything that we have," Pokorny said. "The coaches are working us hard."

The strengths of this year's team will be the defense, where the bulk of the experience is located. According to Freeman, Stone will be commanding the defense this year for the Miracle.

"We should have a strong defense," Pokorny said. "If something goes wrong we just have to stay calm and stay motivated. We need to remind ourselves it's just a game."

Along with defense, the Miracle are getting better and better

on the skates every time they lace the skates up.

"We have a couple fifth graders that will see time this year," Freeman said. "Bailey Prather's skating is well beyond her years."

With little experience comes growing pains, and Freeman isn't going to use the growing pains negatively, only to improve his squad.

"If they continue to increase the talent level like last years squad, we will do fairly well," Freeman said.

Yankton will face its best competition from teams around the region like Sioux Center and Rapid City this winter.

"Sioux Center is a new team

this season," Freeman said. "Rapid City put together a fairly similar team to ours. A lot of new girls that are trying to get experience for varsity minutes in years to come."

The Yankton Miracle will open the season with a home match against Sioux Center on Dec. 9 at the 4-H Grounds Aloca Arena.

"We want to play our best this season," Freeman said. "I'm looking forward to getting the season going. I want to see where we are at and the progression as season continues."

You can follow Nick Robinson on twitter at twitter.com/theFRANCHISE_9

Vermillion Boys Hope To Take Next Step Hockey

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK
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VERMILLION — With three two-year starters returning and others with starting experience back, the Vermillion Tanagers are looking to take another step forward under fifth-year head coach Jay Drake.

The Tanagers went 10-10 last year, ending the season with a double-overtime loss to Elk Point-Jefferson in the opening round of the District 8A Tournament.

"We are excited about the season," Drake said. "We have five seniors that really should give us good leadership. Each one of them has started for us at one point. We also have a couple of juniors that saw time as sophomores."

Senior guard Austin Krier (14 ppg, 3 rpg, 3 apg) is a two-time all-Big 8 Conference performer who broke into the Tanagers rotation as a freshman.

"We look to Austin for scoring," Drake said. "He has put in a lot of time. He played for the (Dakota) Schoolers the past two years, and has signed with Northwestern College."

Senior guard Tanner Anderson (9 ppg, 3 rpg, 3 apg) has been an honorable mention all-Big 8 se-

lection each of the past two years. Senior forward J.T. Sorensen (6 ppg, 6 rpg) earned all-Big 8 honors last season, and is also a two-year starter. Seniors Anthony Leber (F; 4 ppg, 3 rpg) and Tanner Settles (G; 3 ppg, 2 rpg) also saw time with the first five a year ago.

"We are finally in a position where we have upperclassmen that have been around," Drake said. "It makes the transition into the season easier, having that veteran leadership."

Juniors Jayce Huska (G; 3 ppg), who started the second half of last season, and 6-6 Nick Jensen (C; 5 ppg, 5 rpg) will be looked upon to contribute as well.

"Jayce is a smart kid who has been around the game," Drake said. "Nick was one of our better linemen in football, and we need him to be a presense inside. We need him to give us good minutes and both score and rebound."

Carter Andre, a 6-4 sophomore, gives the Tanagers a potentially strong wing.

"Carter can play on the perimeter," Drake said. "He's a good shooter that led our JV team in scoring last year."

Senior David Day (G/F), juniors Ethan James (G) and Wyatt

Hansen (G), sophomores Tyler Madsen (F), Jack Brown (G), Lofta Covington (F), and freshmen Jeremiah Johnson (G), Paul Schwasinger (G) and Garrett Wilch (F) will all be working to potentially fill roles as the season progresses.

With the Tanagers lacking in size, especially when Jensen is off the floor, the team will need to pick up the pace of the game, Drake said.

"Last year, more than in years past, we started trying to pick up teams full court, trying to make it a full-court basketball game," he said. "We have to do the same thing this year, especially when Nick's not in the game."

While the Tanagers have been lacking in success on the basketball court in recent years, Vermillion has had success in other sports. Drake feels that the hard work and determination that has made the Tanagers strong in other seasons is starting to spill into the winter.

"We have some very competitive kids," he said.

The Tanagers will have their hands full in trying to get to state for the first time since winning back-to-back Class A titles in

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"We're battling injuries right now," Van Winkle said. "Our front line has the most experience, and that (front line) has the most injuries. We need to get healthy so we can be ready for the long haul."

The Bucks will have great competition from surrounding teams like Sioux Center, Huron, Aberdeen and Watertown.

"Right now those programs are kind of struggling," Spencer said. "While they have practically all new members, we have about seven or eight guys with experience."

Yankton will open its season up with three games in a row. On Dec. 7-8 the Bucks will travel to Sioux Falls to take on the Sioux Falls Flyers, and on Sunday, Dec. 9, the Bucks will have their first home game, hosting Huron.

"We have a lot more experience than in years past," Stoll said. "Hopefully we have a better season than in years past, these kids want to do good for each other."

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Yankton High School Winter Sports

Bucks Boys' Basketball

Date	Opponent/Event	Location	Time
11/27	Watertown	Yankton	7:30 p.m.
12/8	Brandon Valley	Brandon Valley	7:30 p.m.
12/11	Sioux Falls Washington	SF Washington	7:30 p.m.
12/22	Aberdeen Central	Aberdeen	4 p.m.
1/4	Huron	Huron	7:30 p.m.
1/5	Brookings	Yankton	7:30 p.m.
1/8	Watertown	Watertown	7:30 p.m.
1/12	Sioux Falls Lincoln	Yankton	3:30 p.m.
1/18	Mitchell	Mitchell	7:30 p.m.
1/24	Sioux Falls O'Gorman	Yankton	7:30 p.m.
1/25	Sioux Falls Roosevelt	Roosevelt	7:30 p.m.
2/1	Pierre T.F. Riggs	Pierre	7:30 p.m.
2/2	Aberdeen Central	Yankton	4 p.m.
2/5	Brookings	Brookings	7:30 p.m.
2/8	Huron	Yankton	7:30 p.m.
2/14	Brandon Valley	Yankton	7:30 p.m.
2/16	Pierre T.F. Riggs	Yankton	7:30 p.m.
2/21	Mitchell	Yankton	7:30 p.m.
2/26, 3/1	District 2AA	TBD	7 p.m.
3/5	Region 1AA	TBD	7 p.m.
3/14-16	State AA	Sioux Falls	TBD

Bucks Wrestling

Date	Opponent/Event	Location	Time
11/27	Huron	Huron	7:30 p.m.
12/1	Watertown Dual Tour.	Watertown	10 a.m.
12/4	Lennox/Lincoln/Washington	S.F. Washington	4 p.m.
12/8	Yankton Invitational	Yankton	11 a.m.
12/15	Washington Inv.	S.F. Washington	9 a.m.
12/18	Brookings/Harrisburg	Yankton	5 p.m.
1/4	Mitchell	Mitchell	7:30 p.m.
1/11	Watertown	Watertown	7:30 p.m.
1/18	Brandon Valley	Yankton	7:30 p.m.
1/19	East-West Duals	Pierre	11 a.m.
1/24	Madison/Roosevelt	S.F. Roosevelt	5:30 p.m.
1/26	Brookings Invitational	Brookings	9 a.m.
1/31	Pierre	Yankton	5 p.m.
2/1	Aberdeen Central	Aberdeen	5 p.m.
2/9	ESD Tournament	Mitchell	11 a.m.
2/14-15	Region 2A	S.F. Lincoln	5 p.m./6 p.m.
2/22-23	State A	Watertown	10 a.m.

Gazelles Girls' Basketball

Date	Opponent/Event	Location	Time
12/6	Brandon Valley	Yankton	7:30 p.m.
12/7	Watertown	Watertown	7:30 p.m.
12/11	Sioux Falls Washington	Yankton	7:30 p.m.
12/17	Brookings	Brookings	7:30 p.m.
12/22	Aberdeen Central	Yankton	4:00 p.m.
1/3	Huron	Yankton	7:30 p.m.
1/10	Watertown	Yankton	7:30 p.m.
1/12	Sioux Falls Lincoln	Sioux Falls Lincoln	3:30 p.m.
1/15	Sioux Falls Roosevelt	Yankton	7:30 p.m.
1/17	Mitchell	Mitchell	7:30 p.m.
1/24	Sioux Falls O'Gorman	SF O'Gorman	7:30 p.m.
2/1	Pierre T.F. Riggs	Yankton	7:30 p.m.
2/2	Aberdeen Central	Aberdeen	7:30 p.m.
2/7	Huron	Huron	7:30 p.m.
2/8	Brandon Valley	Brandon Valley	7:30 p.m.
2/12	Brookings	Yankton	7:30 p.m.
2/16	Pierre T.F. Riggs	Pierre	7:30 p.m.
2/19	Mitchell	Yankton	7:30 p.m.
2/25, 28	District 2AA	TBD	7 p.m.
3/2	Region 1AA	TBD	7 p.m.
3/7-9	State AA	Rapid City	TBD

Gazelles Gymnastics (Yankton-Bon Homme)

Date	Opponent/Event	Location	Time
11/26	Mitchell/SF Washington	SF Washington	6:30 p.m.
11/30	Sioux Falls Invitational	SF Roosevelt	4:00 p.m.
12/4	Mitchell/SF Lincoln	SF Lincoln	6:30 p.m.
12/6	SF O'Gorman/SF Roosevelt	SF O'Gorman	6:30 p.m.
12/10	Wagner	Yankton	6:30 p.m.
12/15	Mitchell Invitational	Mitchell	11:00 a.m.
1/5	Brookings Invitational	Brookings	12:00 p.m.
1/12	Pierre Invitational	Pierre	12:00 p.m.
1/17	Vermillion	Yankton	6:30 p.m.
1/22	SF O'Gorman/SF Washington	SF O'Gorman	6:30 p.m.
2/2	ESD Championships	Huron	1:30 p.m.
2/15-16	State AA	Rapid City	4:30 p.m./5 p.m.