

SOUTH DAKOTA PREP GIRLS' BASKETBALL



ELK POINT-JEFFERSON: Keely Bertram (52)

Alcester-Hudson

COACH: Shannon Hames (6th year)

ASSISTANTS: Eric Bauder, John Hohn

VITALS: Class B, District 8, Region 4B, Tre-Valley Conference

LAST YEAR: The Cubs were 10-13 last season, defeating Gayville in the first round of districts, defeating Centerville in the second round of districts and losing to Viborg-Hurley in the district finals. They lose three letterwinners and two starters from that team.

RETURNING LETTERWINNERS: Shenia Doering (Jr., 5-11, G, 9 ppg, 2 apg, All-Conference), Courtney McKee (Jr., 5-9, F, 6 ppg, 5 rpg, honorable mention All-Conference), Taylor Kjore (Jr., 5-9, G/F, 5 ppg), Jessica Wegh (Sr., 5-4, G), Skylar McConnell (Jr., 5-3, G)

TOP PROSPECTS: Kathe Homandberg (Jr., 5-3), Sierra McConnell (Jr., 5-3, G), Kassie Van-Wyk (Jr., 6-0, F), Tyleen Nelson (Jr., 6-0, F), Jamie Jansen (Jr., 5-10, G/F), Lindsey Terpstra (Jr., 5-6, G), Abbey Farley (So., 5-4, G), Monica Nelson (Fr., 5-9, F), Brianna Walth (Fr., 5-5, G), Kinn DeBruin (Fr., 5-4, G), Kassidy Walth (8th, 5-7, G/F), Olivia Limoges (8th, 5-5, G)

Andes Central

COACH: Mark Unruh (1st year)

ASSISTANT: Michele Plecity

VITALS: Class B, District 12, Region 6B, Little Missouri Valley Conference

LAST YEAR: The Lady Eagles finished 7-14 overall last season, defeating South Central in the first round of district play before losing to Dakota Christian in the title game. They lost three starters to graduation.

RETURNING LETTERWINNERS: Krista Winckler (Sr., 5-8, C, 12 ppg, 8 rpg), Kellie Winckler (Sr., 6-1, G, 20 ppg, 14 rpg), Cybil Chytka (So., 5-7, C, 1 ppg, 2 rpg)

TOP PROSPECTS: JoMarie Garcia (Jr., 5-9, C), Josie Garcia (Sr., 5-5, G), Makayla Pavel (Jr., 5-4, G), Alize Archambeau (So., 5-5, G), Tearanie Stotz (So., 5-3, G), Mad-die Gray (Fr., 5-2, G), Emily House-man (Fr., 5-3, C), Nancy Hernandez (Fr., 5-1, G)

Avon

COACH: Brad Poppe (19th year)

ASSISTANT: Amy Yost

VITALS: Class B, District 11, Region 6B, Little Missouri Valley Conference

LAST YEAR: The Lady Pi-rates were 12-10 last season, losing to Hanson in the second round of district play. They lost four let-terwinners, including three starters.

RETURNING LETTERWINNERS: Chesney Nagel (Jr., 5-9, G, 21 ppg, 5 rpg, All-Conference), Ari-anna Oorlog (Jr., 5-9, F, 7 ppg, 3.4 rpg), Emily Mudder (Sr., 5-6, F, 2 ppg, 2 rpg), Alyson Roth (Sr., 5-9, F), Shay Mednansky (Jr., 5-7, G, 1 ppg, 1 rpg), Amanda Reiss (So., 5-5, G, 1 ppg, 1 rpg), Heidi Cap (Fr., 5-10, C, 2 ppg, 2 rpg)

TOP PROSPECTS: Randi Hento (So., 5-5, G), Lexi Olson (Fr., 5-5, G), Courtney Stewart (Fr., 5-8, F), Sami Pfarr (So., 5-7, F), Lea Wormsbucher (Fr., 5-5, F)

Beresford

COACH: Brent Palmer (3rd year)

ASSISTANTS: Jeff Olson,

Kelly Knutson

VITALS: Class A, District 8, Region 4A, Big Sioux Conference

LAST YEAR: The Watchdogs lost six letterwinners, including four starters from last season's 16-6 squad. Beresford lost to Vermil-lion in the district finals last season.

RETURNING LETTERWINNERS: Alyson Johnsen (Sr., 5-8, G), Taryn Twite (Sr., 5-8, F), Hayley Hansen (Sr., 5-11, F), Ashley Os-



CENTERVILLE: Kieran O'Malley

trem (Sr., 5-8, F)

TOP PROSPECTS: Sophie Doeden (Sr., 5-9, F), Shelby Bickett (Jr., 5-7, F), Jen Swannstrom (Jr., 5-5, G), Hailey Sveeggen (Jr., 5-9, F), Arianna Lyle (Jr., 5-5, G/F), Han-nah Hepner (So., 5-7, F), Molly McInnis (So., 5-9, F)

Bon Homme

COACH: Tara Gubbrud (1st year)

ASSISTANT: Lindsey Fathke

VITALS: Class A, District 10, Region 5A, Little Missouri Valley Conference, Southeast South Dakota Conference

LAST YEAR: The Cavaliers were 15-6 last season, losing to eventual state runner-up Parkston

in the first round of district play. They lost five letterwinners, in-cluding four starters from that team.

RETURNING LETTERWINNERS: Kelsey Sutera (Jr., 5-7, F, 3 ppg, 2 rpg), Jody Kriz (Sr., 5-6, G, 1 ppg), Karlee Kozak (Sr., 5-6, G, 6 ppg, 2 rpg)

TOP PROSPECTS: Emily Pe-chous (Jr., 5-8, F), Shawna Rezac (Jr., 5-6, G), Liz Kubal (So., 5-9, F), Vanessa Navratil (Jr., 5-5, G)

Centerville

COACH: Logan Deide (1st year)

ASSISTANT: Sheila Gust

Poppe

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Poppe's demeanor will help him through the season, accord-ing to Culver.

"Brad doesn't let a whole lot of things bug him," he said. "He's a pretty positive person and, deep down, he wants what's best for the kids.

"If anybody can do it, he can."

While the community has re-sponded positively to decision to have Poppe coach both teams, there have been some questions.

"A couple of people asked if Brad was crazy for doing this, or if I was crazy for letting him," Culver said. "More of it has been concern for Brad's health."

Poppe had already lined up a girls' assistant coach, Amy Yost. Yost, who played for Poppe from 1995-98, had not coached with him but had served as Van Ger-pen's assistant the past two sea-sons. When he told her of his plan, she had mixed reactions.

"I told him I thought he was crazy," she said. "But he was so excited that it was hard not to be excited for him. I love his enthu-siasm for the game of basket-ball."

As the two spoke, Poppe ad-dressed her concerns regarding schedules.

"He knows I have small kids at home, and he said we would try to be as flexible as we could with

practices," Yost said. "He didn't want him coaching (both teams) to be a big stressor for the assis-tants. He was really great about the whole thing."

Boys' assistant Paul Thury, a Parkston native who works as a loan officer at the bank in Avon, was brought in just a month be-fore practice began.

"Brad approached me and asked if I'd be interested," Thury said. "It hadn't been something that I had thought about doing before, but he thought it would be something I'd enjoy doing."

Unlike Yost, Thury knew about the head-coaching situa-tion before he signed on.

"I figured that if there were anybody that could do it, it would be him," Thury said of Poppe. "He lives and breathes basketball."

Thury and Yost knew each other outside of basketball, which is helping the trio work to-gether more smoothly.

"Paul and I are good friends outside of school," Yost noted. "We're all working together to make this happen."

Getting Under Way

The first week of girls' prac-tice went as it would every other year. With the gym all to them-selves, the girls practiced after school and, after Thanksgiving, got another couple practices under their belts.

Then came Monday, Nov. 26, the first day of boys' practice.

The girls had the after-school

slot for the first week, as Poppe explained to his boys' team, so that they would get a full two hours of practice in each night. The girls had a week head start on practice, but play their first game just one day before the boys.

That first day, Poppe finished up his second practice at around 7:30 p.m., finishing what was close to a 12-hour day at Avon High School.

The first of many.

"It's going to make for some long days," he said. "It was a long first day, but it was a very enjoy-able day. I enjoy being with the kids and teaching the game of basketball."

On Wednesday, though, the teams practiced at the same time. As with most schools in the state, Wednesday night school activities have to be done before 6 p.m. to allow kids the opportu-nity to participate in church-re-lated activities.

"Brad had everything mapped out, all in time increments," Yost said. "I honestly couldn't believe how well it worked. The kids transitioned between gyms, be-tween drills, smoothly."

Thury concurred.

"It went surprisingly smoothly," he said. "I didn't know what to expect. There were some bugs to work out, but noth-ing major."

While many of the fundamen-tal drills the teams are running are the same, they are running different offenses.

first-time coach, but he is very open to us working together. I have a lot of confidence that they both will do a great job."

While both assistants have helped the opening weeks of practice run smoothly, so have the kids.

"Honestly, this is the year to try it," Poppe said. "Both groups have had me before as a coach (as a head coach at the varsity or middle school level), and both our boys and girls are a close-knit group. I think both groups will handle it well."

In fact, Yost feels that both teams are looking forward to it.

"Part of the reason it's going to work is because we have a neat group of girls and boys that realizes how difficult it is to find coaches in a small school," she said. "I think they're excited to have him as a coach, and they want it to work out, even if it pro-vides some unique challenges."

You can follow James D. Cim-burek on Twitter at twitter.com/aceman904

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