

WOKSAPE

Gazelles' Defense Staying Persistent Throughout the Season

 **BY TORY GROSS**

With the current level of competition in AA girls' basketball, every game for the Yankton Gazelles is just as tough and as crucial as the next. This was especially true in their game against the Lincoln Patriots last Saturday at the Summit Activities Center. Lincoln is part of Yankton's district, with the game counting for seeding points in the post season. The game was close all the way to the last buzzer, but the Gazelles were able to keep their poise and earn the crucial win with a score of 47-45.

When the game began, things didn't look too promising for the Gazelles as the Patriots' Darby Huganan scored three baskets in the first three minutes. Yankton called a time out, and Coach Pesicka got his team regrouped. The Gazelles settled down and began a steady assault on Lincoln's lead.

It was fast paced and physical, and the advantage went back and forth without a break. Point guard Chloe Cornemann scored a basket; Huganan responded with two free throws, a steal, and another basket. The Gazelles then scored a lay up, and Emily Fedders nailed a three. Yankton went into the second quarter down 15-7.

It was obvious that Huganan was Lincoln's key player, and after the half, the Gazelles' defense stepped up to put the brakes on the Patriot shooter. The recharged defensive effort got a boost from senior Sarah Ekeren's ability to shut down Lincoln's huge post player, Cera Ledbetter, and Yankton began to make their mark.



PHOTOS BY MOLLY HENRICKSON
ABOVE: Gazelles assemble for a free throw.
BELOW: Teammates form a tunnel as the starters are announced.

Cornemann drove for another basket, and Ekeren put back an offensive rebound to edge the Gazelles back into the game at 15-11. Two threes by Lincoln's Mika Standing Soldier, along with a basket by Cornemann, left the game at 21-13 midway through the second quarter. Kelsey Fitzgerald then earned herself a three-point play on an assist by Mikala Hora, back for her first game in over a month after being injured early in the season. Yankton went on to not only cut Lincoln's first-quarter lead, but to edge the Patriots by four heading into halftime.

The second half was more of the same, and the Gazelles kept up their persistent defensive efforts to keep the Patriots out of the paint. Yankton held the lead for the rest of the game, although that slipped to only a two-point advantage in the final minutes. They were able to stay strong and pull out with a win.



Bucks' Basketball Team Trying to Find a Rhythm

 **BY NICK ROBINSON**

The struggles continue for the Yankton Bucks, who have played well of late, though it hasn't been enough. Better play is good, but during crunch time, Yankton has not been able to put teams away.

Turnovers and shot selection have been the Achilles heel for Yankton. The zone defense has proved to be a step in the right direction over the Man to Man the Bucks used to start this season.

Yankton won its lone game of the year against Brandon Valley in BV with 43-42 the final score, leaving Brandon's clutch shooter Ben Schutlz to shoot two free throws with little to no time left. He missed both to give Yankton the win. Only six Bucks scored in the win; Jackson Pasco and Jackson Seitzinger led with ten points. The Mitchell Kernels and legendary coach Gary Munsen, who headed to rival Yankton for the last time as Kernels coach, defeated Yankton 55-43. Yankton was led by Bryan Youngberg who had thirteen points.

Christmas break came and went, which left the Bucks with some time to get better and practice. They added the zone defense, which has stopped teams' best players from scoring. Aberdeen Central came in off their first two wins in over a year; yes, the Golden Eagles were winless last year. They defeated both Rapid City schools. The score of the ESD match was 57-24; Josh White of Aberdeen had 29 points. Yankton was led by Jackson Seitzinger who had 17 points. Juniors Zach Benjamin and Troy Hunhoff saw playing time in the second half.

Yankton headed to Pierre next, where all the Yankton teams won their contests. This is where Yankton ran their zone to defect top recruit Zach Hanson (6'9), Junior, from TF Riggs. Hanson had 15 points in the 66-55 defeat of the depleted Bucks. However, the game was much closer than the score indicated. Seitzinger once again led the Bucks with 27 points.

Yankton hosted the Brookings Bobcats for the second of the two game series in which Brookings won the first game without senior starter Tanner Odegaard. The Bucks played a phenomenal first half, dominating Brookings and making it hard for the Cats to find any rhythm. The second half, on the other hand was a different story,



PHOTO BY MOLLY HENRICKSON
A Bucks' free throw sails toward the net.

Yankton only scored eight points total. Seitzinger lead Yankton with twelve points; three Bucks had six points: Connor Fitzsimmons, Connor Vlasman, and Jackson Pasco.

Yankton has improved much over the season, and their one win season so far has not indicated the talent level on this team. If the Bucks can figure out how to play four quarters of solid basketball, they can be a dangerous team. Hopefully as the season goes on, Yankton can figure out how to play together and can reach their potential. "Right now we are definitely underachieving, but there is still time for us to turn that around," YHS senior, Connor Fitzsimmons, noted.

Yankton headed to Huron on Friday the 13th, and the superstition of the night ended wrong for the Bucks as they got pummeled by the Tigers 49-36. The slow start is what killed the Bucks along with 17 first half turnovers. Yankton headed to Sioux Falls Lincoln to face the Pats the next day for an out of conference game. The Bucks played tough, but didn't get the job done. Yankton was finally able to break their spell of bad shooting which has cost them a number of games. The Bucks lost the contest 55-48. Bryan Youngberg led Yankton with sixteen points.

Bucks' Squad Wrestling Well as Regional Meets Approach

 **BY KAMERON KENDALL**

The YHS wrestling regular season is coming to an end. Many of the Bucks' more difficult matches have been wrestled during home meets; however, the team is pulling through and looking ahead to successful regional competition.

"I will be wrestling next year, maybe just up a weight-class. I achieved becoming varsity (this year). If I could change anything this wrestling season, it would be my 3-9 record. Also, I learned a lot more," said Michael Montoya, Yankton's 120-pound varsity wrestler.

Most of the wrestlers have done their best to put forth what they learn in practice during competition. Even some new faces are bringing wins home for the team which shows most of them are competing for something they really want.

"My conditioning is improving significantly. My moves are getting better. I'm getting faster. I have nothing I would want to change. All summer I'm probably going to lift weights and run a lot—do what I can to keep myself there," said Matt Huber, 138-pound YHS varsity wrestler.

"I'm still improving. I'm working on new things and trying to improve them. There's always room for improvement. If I could change anything, it'd be having a full team—an entire roster, not what we have now," said Logan Smith, 152-pound YHS varsity wrestler.

The season has been difficult, yet fairly painless. The team has only suffered a few losses here, few losses there. As the season moves forward, the team is still pulling through. Even with regionals right around the corner, the team still has a lot of time to pull in some home wins and show us what the Bucks' wrestling team is made of.

"My conditioning has improved; I seem to be doing a lot better on weights and running. If there is anything I could change about this season it would be so we have more people going out for the sport to fill the roster and stay out for it. Possibly, if the option is there for me I will wrestle in college," said Royce Reisner, Yankton's 285-pound varsity wrestler.

During Friday the 13th's match against Huron, the Bucks struggled as a team. Yankton's 160-pound varsity wrestler, James Hisek, stated, "We had to move a couple guys around at the higher weight classes—160, 171, and 182—in order to compete with Huron, and it didn't turn out as we'd hoped."

The Bucks compete tomorrow, January 24, in a triangular with Madison and Roosevelt. Hisek said that most wrestlers should be back to their regular weight classes instead of having to move classes to compete. As a result, Hisek stated, "We should win the dual."



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