

WOKSAPE

River City Cheer Squad is Competing Locally; Preparing for Nationals



BY
**MIKALA
HORA**

River City Cheer and Gymnastics is a new program to Yankton, and many athletes have joined.

The cheer program just started last year and includes four teams: Flurries, Hurricanes, Cyclones and Chill. Practices are held Sunday and Monday.

Some members of the Chill squad, which is the high school age group, are also involved in school-sponsored gymnastics and cheer.

The school-sponsored gymnastic and cheer teams hold practices every day after school, so many girls are putting in numerous practices.

The River City Squad was started and is coached by Justin Olson. The older students also pitch in as some high school girls coach the younger groups of kids.

Gymnastics has been competing competitively for about three years, whereas the cheer squad has only been competing competitively for a year now.

They accept both male and female gymnasts ages two through 18. The competitors are then placed in different classes based on skill level.

During a competition, the girls perform dancing, stunting and tumbling. All parts of the performance are set to music.

In order to put together their routine for this year, the River City squad enlisted the help of the Sioux Falls Dakota Spirit squad. “This year we went to Dakota Spirit in Sioux Falls. They’re a competitive cheer team—a club, but they’ve been in it longer. It took us two days. We worked on stunting skills. We learned our cheer and dance—the whole routine,” said Chill squad member, Cyndal Sathe.

So far this year they have gone to Mitchell and competed where they took first place and brought home the gold.

“That whole week, we had morning practice where we worked on our stunts, and we hit them better than we ever have before,” said Sathe.

The day of the meet, “the little girls, ages five to seven, went first while the older girls watched—we are always last to perform,” said fellow Chill squad competitor, Lexi Schrempp.

The team’s performance depended on the girls hitting their stunts well.

“Stunting involves throwing girls up into the air and catching them,” said Sathe. “And the little girls do the exact same stuff we do, just not as hard.”

Chill team participant, Lindsay Larson said, “We have a lot of different stunts in our routine. The Mitchell meet gave us the experience we needed to know how it feels to hit them. I’m a base, and typically there are three different bases for a flyer. We have to use all our strength to get them in the air and keep them stable. We have to make sure they don’t hit the ground, because stunting can be dangerous.”

The girls who participate in this program are excited about where this program is headed.

“We have a national competition coming up in Kansas on April 6th and 7th,” said Sathe. “It will be exciting—teams from all over will be there.”

The team would like to get the word out about River City, and encourage others in Yankton and surrounding areas to join.

Their next competition is the Valentine Classic in Sioux Falls on Jan. 25.

Bucks Silence the Critics and Take Down Sioux Falls Lincoln



BY
**DREW
KONOPASEK**

Many people around the state thought a matchup between the Yankton Bucks (2-6) and the Sioux Falls Lincoln Patriots (10-2) would be an easy victory for the Patriots.

The few in disagreement included Yankton head coach Chris Haynes, his staff and his players.

The Bucks keyed on playing solid defense, rebounding and hitting their shots.

Those are some of the objectives the Bucks took to heart last Saturday at the Summit Activities Center as they defeated the Sioux Falls Lincoln Patriots by a score of 56 to 53.

The Bucks rewarded the rabunctious crowd with a hard-fought victory as the students celebrated “Mustache Night” and pictures of Coach Arlin Likness painted the student section. “It was exciting game to watch. It was intense to be in the student section—I even felt nervous while watching,” said freshman spectator, Blake Savey.

The Bucks had a scoring outburst totaling the highest mark they have achieved this year with some help from Michael Rucker who had 16 and freshman Reid Savatzke with 15 as they were given the green light to shoot whenever.

In addition, junior forward J.J. Hejna and sophomore swingman Brady Hale chipped in with nine and eight, respectively.

In total, Yankton knocked down seven clutch threes from the parking lot compared to four from a struggling Sioux Falls Lincoln team.

Despite being outrebounded 30 to 28 (11 by J.J. Hejna) and having more turnovers (17 to 15) the Bucks won the foul margin by a mile as they only committed nine fouls compared to Lincoln’s sixteen.

A key factor to the upset special victory was the fact that the Bucks dished out 12 assists (four by Savatzke), while the Patriots were “Ball Hog City”

only posting six assists.

Rucker got the game going early as he hit two quick three pointers giving the team some early momentum and swagger.

The Bucks struggled at times, but they never looked back after that. The Bucks and Patriots continued to go punch for punch in the second half, big shot after big shot.

With the second half winding down and crunch time approaching, Yankton missed three three-pointers in a row.

But, solid defense is what kept the Bucks in the game.

Lincoln stormed to take the lead and as all hope seemed to be shot down, with around 30 seconds left in the game, Rucker hit a deep three pointer to give the Bucks a one point lead.

The Patriots hit a shot to be within one point.

As the Bucks were inbound-ing the ball senior Guard and floor general Andrew Hummel was fouled with seconds left. He capped off the game nicely with a pair of free throws to secure the second victory for the Yankton Bucks this season.

“ I could feel the magic happening in that gym,” senior center Kellen Soulek said. “ It was a great feeling and I cannot wait to help take down some other giants in South Dakota (high school basketball).”

Senior guard Michael Rucker was also pumped about the game and gaining confidence for the games to come in January.

“Once I hit some shots early, I knew this is why I committed to the Yankton basketball program. We are finally getting to the level that we need to be to compete night in and night out,” Rucker said.

The Bucks traveled to ESD rival Mitchell Kernels on Fri., Jan. 18. This was the first matchup between the two foes without legendary Kernel coach Gary Munsen at the helm. Results for Friday’s matchup were unavailable at press time.

The Bucks next home game will be versus two time defending state champion Sioux Falls O’Gorman Knights on Jan. 24.

Gazelles use Balance and Consistency to Power Past Watertown



BY
**MIKALA
HORA**

The Yankton Gazelles have picked their pace up and have been playing a lot better as of late.

On Jan. 10. the Gazelles finished strong as they powered past ESD rival the Watertown Arrows 46-31.

Early on, the Gazelles proved that they had their ‘A’ game and had came to win.

Led by junior guard, Morgan Tessier, the girls played with intensity and fire from the start of the game to the finish.

The Gazelles would continue to build confidence as the game progressed. Throughout the whole game, the Gazelles controlled the pace and made it hard for Watertown to do what they do best, full court press.

Yankton was able to beat their press early and got the Arrows very confused. The Gazelles stayed calm and collected as Watertown attempted to put on the pressure.

With the ability to come down the court and execute their offense, the Gazelles ended up shooting 50 percent and out rebounding the Arrows by 17.

They limited the Arrows to 18 percent shooting and overcame 16 turnovers to pick up a well-deserved win.

“A big part of our win Thursday night was our balance on the court,” junior guard Tessier said. Keeping the court balanced and running the offense and spreading the Arrow defense out made it hard for them to keep track of the Gazelle players.

“We knew that moving the ball well and executing our offense would get us points, so that is what we went out to do,” Tessier said about Thursday night’s game.

Balance allowed Yankton to put multiple players on the score



PHOTO BY MEGAN FORD

Coach Pesicka speaks to his team before the Watertown game.

board, Morgan Tessier leading the way with 15 points and eight rebounds.

“Sometimes a player just can’t miss a shot,” junior fan JJ Hejna said. “She (Tessier) was on fire and played one of the better games I have seen her play in a long time.”

Coming off the bench, Jessica Wirth recorded eight points. She was followed by Mikala Hora with seven points and 14 rebounds, and Kelsey Fitzgerald added seven more points to the board.

Along with execution on the offensive end, the Gazelles worked hard in the paint to out-rebound the Arrows 39-23.

Yankton was shooting with confidence and not afraid to take wide-open shots when available.

With a pair of quick threes, the Gazelles would go into the locker room at half with a 26-14 lead.

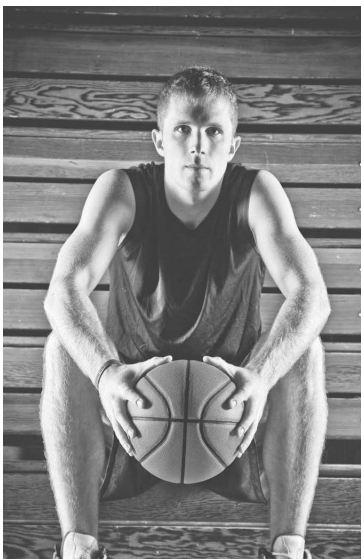
Coming back out in the third quarter, Watertown twice cut the Gazelle lead under 10, but the Gazelles kept their composure under the full-court press and managed to bring the ball up the court to set up their offense.

“I thought that the Gazelles played amazing,” Hejna said. “They really looked like it was a full team effort.”

The Yankton Gazelles traveled to Mitchell to take on the top ranked Kernels on Jan. 17. The Kernels took down the Gazelles in that game, 72-34.



The next home game for the Gazelles will be against the Pierre Governors on Feb. 1 at the Summit Activities Center.

“I hope that the Gazelles can improve a lot more this season,” Hejna said. “They have had a lot of improvement, though. Hopefully they can find a way to get hot at the end of the season and make it to the state tournament.”




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