

# Gazelles Finish Fourth At State

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK  
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SIoux FALLS — It had been four years since a Yankton Gazelles squad stood on the awards stand at a state track. To do it, the Gazelles had to do something they hadn't done in a lot longer.

## also

■ Photos and video from the state meet are online at [yankton.net](http://yankton.net)

Yankton claimed a top-eight finish in all five relays, including four finals on Saturday, to finish fourth in the Class AA girls' team standings at the South Dakota State Track and Field Championships at Howard Wood Field. Rapid City Stevens won the girls' team title, with Sioux Falls Lincoln claiming the boys' crown.

"We were optimistic that, if we could put things together, we could still make it happen," said Yankton head coach Luke Youmans. "We knew it would come down to every last point, and that the 4-by-4 (1600 relay) could be a game-changer. And it was."

Yankton beat out Eastern South Dakota Conference champions Brandon Valley for the fourth and final spot on the podium, edging the Lynx by 1.5 points. While Brandon Valley won the 1600 relay, the Gazelles' fourth place finish was enough to hold Brandon Valley off.

"This had all the dramatics that you want in a state meet," Youmans said. "You had to compete from beginning to end."

As they had several times during the final month of the season, seniors played key roles for the Gazelles, including an individual champion and another individual medal. Yankton also had one or two seniors on each of the four relays.

"That's been the story all year, how improved our seniors have been," Youmans said. "They took it to a whole new level."

Annie Kruse highlighted the Yankton seniors' efforts on Saturday, winning the 1600 in 5:05.18. Sophomore Savannah Woods finished 10th in 5:24.49, while eighth grader Madison McClure was 19th in 5:39.02.

Kruse was happy to go out on a victory after finishing second in the 3200 and helping the Gazelles to third in the 3200 relay on Friday.

"It was very hot (Friday), then doing the 4-by-8 and sitting out in the heat took its toll. I could feel the energy draining. I wasn't happy with my two-mile because of those conditions," she said. "I had to change my attitude. Once I stepped onto the track, I told myself that I was a strong runner. I needed to feel that throughout the race."

Kruse led the first two laps, but was passed by Stevens' Tamara Gorman, the 3200 champ from Friday, in the third lap. Gorman surged at the start of the fourth and final lap, but Kruse matched, then surpassed Gorman's kick.

"I was trying to run my own race, but I knew I couldn't lose contact with her," Kruse said. "I stayed within sight of her, and that really helped me push



ABOVE: Yankton's Annie Kruse celebrates after winning the Class AA girls' 1600-meter run at the South Dakota State Track and Field Meet on Saturday in Sioux Falls. Kruse's victory helped the Gazelles to a fourth place finish in the team standings, their highest mark since 2010.

BELOW: Yankton's Steven McKee fires the shot put during the Class AA event at the South Dakota State Track and Field Championships on Saturday in Sioux Falls. McKee placed seventh in the event.

at the end."

Kruse will compete at Howard Wood Field again, as she will compete in track and cross country in Sioux Falls at Augustana, but she was happy with how she ended her prep career on that track.

"It feels really awesome," Kruse said. "This whole track season has been such an amazing experience, with highs and lows. It was great to finish on a high note."

Senior Hailey Luken opened Saturday's competition for YHS with a fourth place finish in the 100-meter hurdles (15.17). Luken was one of three Gazelle seniors to compete in relays, running the opening leg of the fifth place 400 relay (50.43). Brenna Fitzsimmons anchored the 400 relay, opened the second place medley (4:14.44) and ran on the seventh place 800 relay (1:47.21). Whitlee Larson opened the 1600 relay and anchored the medley.

"Brenna Fitzsimmons didn't compete in an open event, but she was a part of nearly every one of our relays," Youmans said. "She was a make-or-break factor as to whether we were coming home with a place or going home empty-handed."

In the medley, Larson took the baton in sixth and surged into the lead before Stevens rallied to take the event. She also got the Gazelles off on the right foot in the 1600 relay.

Larson had been disappointed in her Friday efforts in the 3200 relay and the open 800, where she placed eighth. "I had to put everything behind me," she said. "I wanted to 'PR' (set a personal record), even if it was in a relay, and I was able to catch up to Stevens and battle for first."

After the Gazelles had finished outside the top 10 each of the past two seasons, Larson was happy to play a part in getting Yankton back on the awards stand.

"I'm definitely proud of this weekend. I'm really excited for all of us," she said. "To make the jump we did from last year to this year, I'm really excited and confident for the young girls to continue to improve."

Larson will now focus on her future at South Dakota State, competing for the Jackrabbits.

"Next year will be a whole new world. I'll be running with



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## A: Bertram's Career Comes Full Circle

BY JEREMY HOECK  
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SIoux FALLS — Keely Bertram didn't run a full circle (more accurately, an oval), but her career came full circle in a big way.

The departing senior at Elk Point-Jefferson captured the Class A 200-meter dash title Saturday, ending a 4-year drought her for at the top of the awards podium.

"It's been a long time, but this is a great way to end," Bertram said at the South Dakota State Track Meet at Howard Wood Field in Sioux Falls.

Bertram — a Black Hills State basketball recruit — was part of the Huskies' champion medley relay squad during her eighth-grade year, back in 2010.

Since then, she took fifth place in the 200 during her freshman year, missed her sophomore year with an injury, and took fifth place a year ago as a junior.

And just like that, Bertram's high school career came to a successful close.

"It's awesome, but kind of surreal," she said. "It's my last race ever."

Earlier Saturday, Bertram finished second in the 100 with a time of 12.78, behind Belle Fourche eighth-grader Shayla Howell (12.68).

Then came the 200, which Bertram won with a clocking of 26.73, but not without a battle first.

As she came around the turn, she was in a neck-and-neck battle with Miranda Velgersdyk of Sioux Falls Christian.

Not to mention a stiff wind blowing at her.

"I knew I had to pump my arms hard," Bertram said. "I saw the line and went for it."

She wasn't about to let her goal of a state title slip away in the final meters, Bertram added — referencing the team vs. individual aspect of the sport.

"It's a team sport and I love that part of it, but you can do something on your own," she said. "And that was something I worked hard at."

Bertram's championship highlighted the area Class A action Saturday at the state meet.

Two other athletes earned runner-up finishes in their events, and the Bon Homme girls wrapped up a fifth-place spot in the team race.

Dakota Valley senior Jason Lupkes wrapped up his career by taking second place in the discus at 157-feet-8, behind Tyler Lems of Canton (169-7).

Lupkes said he had an "up and down" season, highlighted by a 162-foot effort earlier in

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# Irene-Wakonda Takes Class B Combined Title

BY JORDYNNE HART  
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SIoux FALLS — The Sokolowski sisters are not only family, they are competitors, teammates and best friends. The girls helped Irene-Wakonda win not only the Class B Combined Boys and Girls State Track Championship but also second as a Class Girls Team last Saturday afternoon.

Junior Lauren Sokolowski took home her third Class Title in the 100-meter Hurdles with a time of 14.98, while her sister, Freshman Shannon followed in fourth at 16.04. The girls were all smiles walking off the track at Howard Wood Field.

"I'm glad it's over, I always get so nervous. My goal was to beat the state record, but there is always next year."

There was no hard feelings from Shannon after the race.

"It's not weird at all competing against my sister. She is my best buddy and coach. We constantly push each other."

Sophomore Andrea Sokolowski and sister Lauren helped their team win 3rd in the 4x100 relay with teammates Bailey Hinseth and Taylor Lee. Coach Brent Mutchelknaus commented on the sisters presence on the team.

"The girls compete as sisters. It's friendly, but they do push each other as well as the team."

The Sokolowski sisters also helped their team place third in the 400 relay in 51.72 and fourth in the 800-meter relay, with teammates Taylor Lee and Caitlin Hinseth completing both relays. Shannon placed fourth in the 300-meter Hurdles at 48.92.

With the Sokolowski sisters pushing each other and their team, everyone can expect great success for the Eagles next year as well.

Coach Brent Mutchelknaus was more than happy with the teams overall performance.

"I'm so excited. We had a chance in both boys and girls and possibly combined. It took such an effort from the kids. You can't beat it."

## Anderson Sparks Parker To Boys' Title

Sophomore Zack Anderson of Parker helped his team take the boys' team title, a 58-57 victory over Herreid-Selby Area.

"They totally deserve it. We had a chance and they took it. I'm so proud." Coach Phil Bjorneberg said after getting off the championship podium.

Anderson won the Class Boys High Jump at 6-4. He tried for the record at 6-7 but just missed it on his third attempt. Anderson broke the school record earlier this year with his personal record of 6-6.

"My goal was to reach 6-6,

but when you have already won you might as well go for it."

Teammate's Tristen Erickson, Eric Hunstad, and Buyck Kordell were more than excited about the Pheasants unexpected title.

"We were not expecting this at all. Zack won and then there was an extra ten points on the board. It all came out of nowhere. We never thought it was going to happen."

Anderson plans to attend the USF High Jump Camp this summer.

"My goal next year is to get up to the sevens." Also for Parker, Tristen Erickson was second in the 400 (50.70). Kordell Buyck placed eighth at the 110-meter hurdles with a time of 17.12. The Parker boys also won the medley relay and placed fifth in the 800 relay (1:34.58).

Eric Hunstad, Jake Anderson, Erickson and Michael Olson rounded out the Pheasants' medley win.

## Other Boys' Highlights

Freeman earned third with 51 points. Irene-Wakonda was fifth with 35 points.

The Freeman boys claimed first in the 1600-meter relay with a time of 3:31.06. Tristan Ashwell, Cody Roth, Cole Paulson and Brennan Schmidt) completed that four-

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Irene-Wakonda's Lauren Sokolowski defended her Class B 100-meter hurdles title at the South Dakota State Track and Field Meet on Saturday in Sioux Falls. The win helped the Eagles finish second in the girls' standings and win the combined team title in Class B.

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