

Dome Dreams

Yankton Bucks Look To Finish Unbeaten Run With 11AA Title

STORY BY NICK ROBINSON • SPORTS@YANKTON.NET

The Yankton Bucks football team is looking for a return to the promised land as they challenge the Brookings Bobcats for the 11AA state championship game tonight (Friday) at 7:30 p.m. in the DakotaDome in Vermillion.

“We have a lot of heart,” Yankton head football coach Arlin Likness said. “For us to be undefeated with our schedule going into the state championship is remarkable. But we have the most important game left — the one we have been preparing ourselves for all season.”

In the last two weeks the Bucks (10-0) stormed through the playoffs with a 43-21 victory over Huron and a 27-0 victory over Harrisburg in the semi-finals.

“Our defense has been solid all year,” Likness said. “They took it to another level, and to hold an offense like Harrisburg to zero points is outstanding. It’s great momentum heading into the Dome.”

Senior quarterback Mason Strahl is also 94 yards away from becoming the all-time career passer at Yankton High School.

“Winning the game is what is more important,” Strahl said. “If I can get the record and the win, it would be awesome. I’m just trying to do whatever I can to help win this football game.”

Brookings (8-2) defeated Watertown 34-13 and defending champions Pierre 27-7 to punch its ticket to Vermillion.

“Pierre came out and gave us their best shot,” Brookings head coach Lee Schmidt said. “They have a good team, but our kids kept their nose to the ground and fought through it.”

The Bobcats came into this season with a lot of hype and expectations, but Schmidt said they have embraced it all throughout the season.

“This group wanted to change the landscape of things and really, the bullseye on our back helped us,” he said. “It made us a stronger team and got us ready for situations like we’re about to face.”

Brookings, like Yankton, has a strong senior class. The Bobcats are led by 16 seniors, some of whom have played three years at the varsity level.

“We have had our high’s and low’s this season,”



P&D FILE PHOTO

Yankton's Colton Diefenderfer, left, Landon Binder and Evan Greenaway meet at Huron quarterback Sam Carr during their Class 11AA football quarterfinal on Thursday at Yankton's Crane-Youngworth Field.

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Watertown Sweeps Gazelles For State AA Tourney Berth



RICH REMMERS/WATERTOWN PUBLIC OPINION

Yankton's Kami Cornemann (41) and Sophie Drotzmann (20) attempt to block a spike by Watertown's McKenzie Werner (16).

BY RICH REMMERS
Watertown Public Opinion

WATERTOWN — Watertown entered Thursday night's region volleyball match with Yankton as the heavy favorite and didn't disappoint.

The third-ranked Arrows punched their ticket to the state Class AA tournament on Nov. 20-22 in Yankton with a 3-0 win over the Gazelles. Watertown won by scores of 25-23, 25-16 and 25-22 and will enter the state tournament with a 19-4 record. Yankton finished its season with a 9-14 record.

“It was a very solid performance by our girls tonight,” said Watertown coach Kim Rohde. “I thought the girls came out really focused and they wanted to get the job done and they showed

also

■ Crofton Earns Berth In C2 Semifinals.
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lead but had to fight off Yankton down the stretch. The Gazelles battled back to tie the game at 23-23 behind consecutive ace serves by Haley Mines and a kill by Hannah Bockholt.

The Arrows stopped the skid on the next point on a hitting error by Yankton and closed out the set on a kill by McKenzie Werner after an incredible rally that was highlighted by a diving dig from Macy Denzer to keep play alive for the Arrows.

that tonight.”

The Arrows had all they could handle against the pesky Gazelles in the opening set. Watertown managed to bolt to a 19-11

“Watertown is just tremendously talented. They are super athletic and their defense is phenomenal,” said Yankton coach and former Watertown head coach Tiffany Beste. “We played good defense tonight but you really can't play the kind of defense they play. They just make some incredible digs to keep the ball alive.”

The Arrows rode the momentum from the opening set and again raced to a 19-11 lead in the second set. This time, though, the Gazelles had no answer to fight back against the hard hitting from Werner, Denzer and Danielle Gottsleben.

Watertown led 24-15 before Becky Frick pounded a kill to keep Yankton breathing but the Gazelles sailed a serve long on the

GAZELLES | PAGE 8A

Tigers Tame Wolsey-Wessington In 9A Final

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK
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VERMILLION — Coach Pat Ruml was not sure how his Howard Tigers would handle their first big test of the season, especially since it came in the Class 9A championship game in the DakotaDome.

They handled it just fine. Howard scored two fourth-quarter touchdowns and survived a late scoring threat to beat Wolsey-Wessington 32-20 on Thursday, earning the program's first title since 2009.

“When you don't lose all year, you wonder how your kids will do,” Ruml said. “They responded great. When Wolsey-Wessington had the ball and was coming back, our defense did what it had to do.”

Howard's Luke Loudenburg capped his record-setting career with 227 yards

**Howard 32,
Wolsey-Wess. 20**

53 The Big Number

The number of rushing touchdowns this season by Howard's Luke Loudenburg this season. He had 3 on Thursday.

and three touchdowns. The all-time leading rusher in South Dakota 9-man history, Loudenburg was named the MVP and Outstanding Back of the game.

“I've had the best career I could possibly wish for,” said Loudenburg, who finished his highlight-filled senior season with 2,685 yards and 53 touchdowns. “I love my teammates. I love my coach. This is the best feeling in the world.”

Also for Howard, Jordan Genzlinger and Gunner

Gilbertson connected on a pair of touchdown passes in the first quarter.

Wolsey-Wessington quarterback Lorenzo Williams rushed for 242 yards and three touchdowns. The standout back finished his senior season with 2,775 yards and 40 touchdowns.

“He leads us in workouts. He leads us on the field,” Warbirds coach Gordon Hooks said of his senior quarterback. “He has worked really hard to get to this point.”

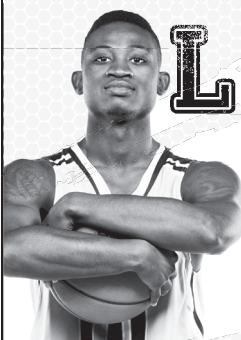
The game could not have started better for Howard. Wolsey-Wessington fumbled the opening kickoff, setting up Loudenburg's first score, from 39 yards out. After a Warbird three-and-out, Loudenburg's 30-yard return set up a 12-yard scoring pass from Genzlinger to Gilbertson for a 14-0 lead, just 3:44 into



JEREMY HOECK/P&D

Howard's Luke Loudenburg pulls away from the Wolsey-Wessington defense during the Class 9A championship game on Thursday at the DakotaDome in Vermillion. Loudenburg rushed for 227 yards and three touchdowns in a 32-20 victory over the Warbirds.

CLASS 9A | PAGE 9A



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LANCERS

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