

# WOKSAPE

"The Wise Book"



## Victory At The Dome!



### Bucks Claim First State Title Since 2002

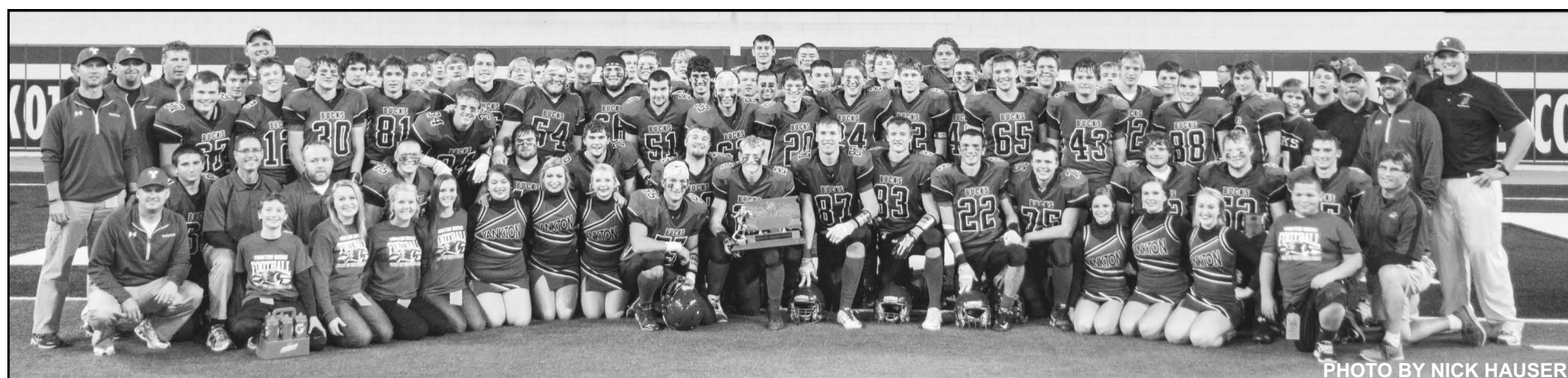


PHOTO BY NICK HAUSER



BY  
ADAM  
WALTER

Like the echoes of the footsteps of the men who played before them, the Yankton Bucks Football Team set foot on the turf of the Dakota Dome in hopes of bringing a state championship back to Yankton.

No one thought it would come in such a dramatic fashion.

It came down to one play—one moment that defined a season—and one defensive stand that seemed to make time stand still.

It was arguably one of the best games in Yankton football history.

"I believe that we will win! I believe that we will win!" echoed the hundreds of Yankton students who lined up hours before the game outside of the Dakota Dome in anticipation of a front row seat.

The Bucks had the weight of a community on their shoulders.

Over 2000 Yankton fans filled the Dome creating a red sea of support.

As the then (10-0) Yankton Bucks embarked on their quest to defeat (8-2) Brookings Bobcats, a community stood by patiently.

The Bucks' early lead didn't do much to quiet the noise level in the Dome; if anything, it fueled the fire that was already burning in both team's fans.

The Dakota Dome echoed with screaming fans from both sides.

Leading at half time, the Bucks were in the driver's seat.



PHOTO BY NICK HAUSER



PHOTO BY MANNY VALADEZ

**Top:** State champion Buck Football players. **Above left:** Sheldon Gant moves the football. **Above right:** Crowd support from the student section. **Right:** Mason Strahl (15) accepts the Joe Robbie MVP award after the Bucks' state championship win.

If one had asked anyone at the game, no one would have thought it would come down to a close game, but Brookings kept fighting and eventually took a lead over the Bucks. Then came the beginning of a grudge match as Brady Hale lined up with seconds on the clock to kick a 45-yard field goal that would tie the game.

Fans from each side straddled their seats and held their breath in anticipation. The fate of a season rested on Hale's shoulders as he started toward what would be the most important field goal in his career.

A collective gasp was heard as the ball traveled through the air. As the kick sailed through the uprights, the Dome erupted into screaming for one side and

heartache for the other.

Hale's kick inevitably tied the game and sent it into the Bucks' third overtime finish of the year.

The Yankton Bucks and their fans are no strangers to overtime games. Beating Brandon Valley in overtime and taking down O'Gorman in overtime on their homecoming gave the Bucks a sense of experience in this area of play.

Trying to enshrine their names with the greats who came before them, the Bucks took the ball and came ready to play. On the first play of overtime, senior Ryan Sternhagen weaved through the defense on his way to a touchdown, which was followed by a Brady Hale extra point, giving the Bucks a 7-point lead. Now it was Brook-

ings' turn.

Ironically, a team can play an entire season with the outcome of that season coming down to one defensive stand and one play—one play that ultimately decides whether what the team has spent the last four months working towards was worth it.

Brookings didn't waste much time either. After a few plays, Brookings' Mikey Daniels took it to the house bringing them within one point of Yankton.

Next came the play that defined a community. Brookings decided instead of tying it with an extra point, they were going for it and for the win. As the two teams lined up for that last monumental play, thousands watched in anticipation.

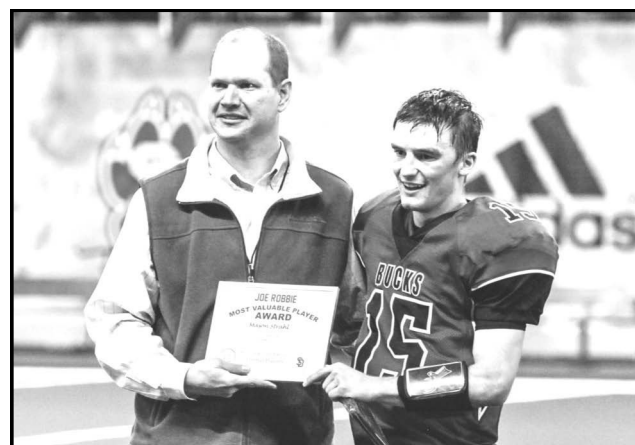


PHOTO BY NICK HAUSER

At this point, it was so loud in the Dakota Dome fans couldn't hear themselves yelling.

Brookings snapped the ball and everyone's heart sank as Brookings' quarterback threw a screen pass to Mikey Daniels who was rolling out on his right.

Like a man rising from the ashes, Matt Fitzgerald came out of nowhere and tipped the ball away.

As the ball hit the ground

everyone collectively paused for a moment to take in what just happened.

The Bucks were state champions.

After the dust settled and the undefeated (11-0) Bucks ran off the field to celebrate, a somewhat familiar chant could be heard echoing throughout the Dome. "I BELIEVE THAT WE HAVE WON! I BELIEVE THAT WE HAVE WON!"

## Senior Bucks Reflect Over Their High School Football Careers



BY  
ALLIE  
THIESSE

The senior Bucks helped bring home the State Championship this year—a visit to the Dome that Yankton hasn't made since 2005.

Most of the boys have been dreaming of this since they were young, little did they know their dream would come true.

The Bucks faced many challenges throughout this season. Whether it was three overtimes, not having a head coach for a game or just facing adversity as most teams do, the real test to the team was the ability to find leaders.

"We obviously had to overcome the three overtime games and a game without a head coach. We also had a couple games that we played without a few key players. We overcame this adversity, because we were the true definition of a 'team.' We didn't have just one good player or just one good coach for that matter. Players stepped up to fill a position pretty well," said senior Buck and captain Nick LaFave.

During the span of their season, the Bucks worked together and accurately depicted the team they would become. Another challenge the Bucks had to face was their seventeen day long homecoming game, after the home game was canceled due to severe weather.



PHOTO BY TARA BLAHA

Senior captains are shown heading out to the state championship overtime coin toss.

"We kept just focusing on the next game, we didn't think about having to travel to Aberdeen. We played three games in seven days and that truly tested us as a team," said senior Buck and captain Evan Greenway.

As leaders, each senior captain rose to the occasion and helped make decisions as a team.

"As captains we made decisions for the team to the best of our abilities. It was a challenge at times, but we don't regret anything," said Greenway.

The Bucks had twenty-two returning seniors, so many potential role models were on the team. Even though many of the seniors didn't get as much playing time as they hoped, they knew they were still an asset for the younger players to look up to. "We used our roles as captain to help lead by example." Brady Hale, senior and captain stated, "We wanted to be the guys that the younger kids could ask any questions, and we would be able to help them out."

As for the championship game, the Bucks tried to treat it like they were just

going out to play a regular season game at Crane-Youngworth.

"We tried to keep it as normal as possible. We were inside the whole week, so it was tough because you couldn't cut and you couldn't run very well. We kept it as normal as we could throughout the week," said Mason Strahl a senior and captain.

The Bucks believe that the future of the Buck Football program is bright and that a trip to the Dome next year is extremely possible.

"I believe the captains did a really good job at being leaders. They didn't need to be with twenty-two seniors, because I felt we were all good leaders. Having a Mason Strahl return as captain was really nice; he knows a lot and has a lot to offer. The captains did a nice job leading the team. They were able to show the younger kids what was right and what was wrong," said senior Buck Charlie Stephenson.

The Bucks leadership is what really carried them through the season to the state championship win. It will be hard for the Bucks to lose twenty-two outstanding young men, but it will be a chance for the younger players to take on the leadership roles.

LaFave stated, "Being a senior Buck was a great experience. As a team, grade meant nothing, as age doesn't necessarily define skill. I trusted all of my brothers with my back."