

THE FALL OF THE ESD EMPIRE

YHS GAMEDAY

**Yankton (6-2) at
Brandon Valley (8-0)**

7 p.m., Brandon Valley High School Field

LAST MEETING: Brandon Valley held Yankton to 74 yards rushing in a 49-7 decision, giving the Lynx a share of the 2011 ESD title.

LAST WEEK: Yankton bounced back from back-to-back losses with a 40-0 victory over Mitchell. It was the Bucks' 29th straight victory over the Kernels.

Brandon Valley used a 419-yard passing day from Chase Marso, 200 and three touchdowns of it to Iowa recruit Matt Vandenberg, to beat Pierre 42-27.

NEXT UP: The Class 11AA playoffs begin on Tuesday. The top four seeds, likely including Brandon Valley regardless of tonight's outcome and likely including Yankton with a victory, get a bye to the quarterfinals on Monday, Oct. 29.

FOLLOW THE GAME ONLINE: The Press & Dakotan will host a live chat during the game. Find it here: <http://www.yankton.net/yhsgameday>

Bucks Face Lynx With ESD Title On The Line

BY CHRIS RILEY
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Since 1965, the Yankton Bucks have won at least a share of 24 Eastern South Dakota Conference football titles. Throughout that impressive run, only two times has Yankton suffered a four-year dry spell.

The first was from 1986-1989. The second is from 2008 to the present.

The Bucks hope to end that streak tonight in Brandon against the high-powered and undefeated Lynx in the regular season finale for both teams.

"There is a lot on the line," Bucks coach Arlin Likness said. "You play the whole season to have the last game determine the conference title."

Both teams, who also played for the ESD crown to end last season, enter the contest 6-0 in ESD play. The Lynx remain undefeated (8-0) after securing a close 18-15 win over O'Gorman in their season opener back on August 24.

Yankton, 6-2 and tied for fifth in the latest Class 11AA South Dakota Sportswriters Association Poll, suffered their lone setback against Roosevelt and Washington, a pair of Sioux Falls teams left off Brandon Valley's schedule this season.

Last year it was the Lynx who came into Crane-Youngworth Field and took advantage of four Yankton turnovers to post the 49-7 victory. Numerous key players from that Brandon Valley team from a year ago remain, most notably senior quarterback Chase Marso who has led a pass-happy and high-scoring Lynx offense all season long.

Brandon Valley comes into tonight's contest averaging 40 points a game in 2012, while allowing only 85 total points, 27 of those coming in last Friday's 42-27 victory over Pierre.

The Bucks defense, especially the secondary, will face a stiff test against the Lynx, similar to that against Washington in a 52-8 setback 13 days ago.

"Brandon Valley is a complete team with size, speed and great receivers and an excellent quarterback," Likness said. "How much we have improved from the Washington game to this game is the big question."

Staying injury-free throughout last week's 40-0 thrashing of

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P&D FILE PHOTO

Sioux Falls Washington lineman Derek Farniok, 79, celebrates as the Warriors clinched the 2009 Class 11AA championship with a victory over Aberdeen Central. The game marked the most recent finals appearance for an Eastern South Dakota Conference school. The ESD has not won a football title since Yankton beat Washington in the 2002 final.

ESD Title Success Becoming A Distant Memory

Several Factors Have Contributed To Changing Tide

BY JEREMY HOECK
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EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the second in a three-part series looking at the gap between the Sioux Falls schools and the rest of Class 11AA in the sport of football. Part one appeared in the Tuesday, Oct. 16, edition. Part three will appear in the Saturday, Oct. 20, edition.

A playmaker at quarterback and stalwart on defense, Jared Hannigan had no way of knowing that his squad would be the last Eastern South Dakota Conference team to fight for a state championship.

That was three years ago. Hannigan, now a junior on the Northern State men's basketball team, was the quarterback of the 2009 Aberdeen Central football team that lost to Sioux Falls Washington in the 2009 Class 11AA title game.

"I wish I could go back to that game and get one for our conference," Hannigan said. "The other leagues like the (Greater Dakota Conference) has taken over with the Sioux Falls schools."

"I'd like some revenge." Fortunes have changed in recent years for the ESD, the once preeminent conference in the state before the Sioux Falls public schools rose to prominence nearly a decade ago.

Between 1981 (the start of the three-class system) and 2003, there was at least one ESD team in the championship game in every year but one — 1987 when Rapid City Stevens beat Sioux Falls Washington.

In that span, there were seven all-ESD showdowns and 14 state champions from the



league. Yankton leads the record books with 11 title game appearances, followed by Brandon Valley (5), Brookings (4), Aberdeen Central (3), Watertown (3), Huron (2), Mitchell (2) and Pierre (1).

"I remember, no matter what your record was, you had to be prepared for every game because it's a tough conference," Hannigan said. "You can always expect an ESD game to be a tough one."

Since Aberdeen Central came up short to Washington in 2009, the ESD has been shut out of the state finals at the DakotaDome. The 11AA title game has featured a pair of Sioux Falls schools five times in the last six years.

The disparity was never more obvious than up in Aberdeen. In Hannigan's senior year, the Golden Eagles went 12-1, won the ESD title and beat Sioux Falls O'Gorman twice before losing in the dome.

The next year? Aberdeen Central went 1-9.

"The ESD was, obviously, a powerful league," former Huron coach Dan Thelen said. "There were always three or four really good teams, and it didn't seem like it was ever down. Eventually, with enrollments and other stuff, it's really become a problem."

A Numbers Game?

The consistent argument from current and former ESD coaches interviewed for this story was numbers — "They're just so big at the top level," Thelen said.

Enrollment figures do show that to be true, specifically where the disparity argument is concerned. According to the state's Average Daily Memberships (ADMs), which is based on enrollment in grades 9-11, three Sioux Falls schools and both Rapid City schools rank among the top six.

Aberdeen Central, at 891.9, is the highest among ESD schools, followed by Watertown (876.51), Brandon Valley (761.48), Yankton (687.15), Pierre (610.01), Mitchell (574.16), Brookings (563.71) and Huron (542.24).

Though those numbers do not take into account senior classes, Thelen was adamant in his stand that depth plays a key role. Huron, for example, has an enrollment closer to that of many nine-man schools than it does to the likes of Sioux Falls Washington or Roosevelt.

"For us to compete against Sioux Falls, we have to have two good classes," said Thelen, who had a career record of 132-86 in 23 years that saw him guide Montrose and Huron to state titles. He remains an assistant with the Huron staff. "When I was coaching in the early 90's, we had 40 and above for those two classes, now we're about 30. Now, when we lose a starter, we have to bring in a kid who isn't anywhere near that level."

"Sioux Falls can usually bring in a sub almost to the same level, because of their numbers."

ESD Teams No Longer Making Themselves At Home In The DakotaDome

ESD teams have made just three appearances and recorded no wins in the Class 11AA football finals since Yankton won the 2002 title. Aberdeen Central has made two finals (2003, 2009). Yankton appeared in the 2005 championship.

	Total		2003-2011	
	Appearances	Titles	Appearances	Titles
S.F. O'Gorman	14	8	4	2
Yankton *	11	6	1	0
S.F. Washington	7	2	5	2
Brandon Valley *	5	3	0	0
S.F. Roosevelt	4	3	4	3
Brookings *	4	2	0	0
Watertown *	3	2	0	0
Aberdeen Central *	3	0	2	0
Spearfish	2	2	1	1
Huron *	2	1	0	0
R.C. Stevens	2	1	0	0
Mitchell *	2	0	0	0
S.F. Lincoln	1	1	1	1
Sturgis	1	0	0	0
Pierre	1	0	0	0
SIoux FALLS	26	14	14	8
ESD/NON-SIOUX FALLS	36	17	4	1

NOTE: Class 11AA championship appearances only. Brandon Valley joined Class 11AA in 1989, and won three Class 11A titles. Spearfish is no longer a member of Class 11AA. Non-Sioux Falls title from 2003-2011 was Spearfish in 2003. * - ESD member.

For comparison's sake, Washington has 49 players between its senior and junior classes this season, while Roosevelt has 47. Yankton, on the other hand, has 33 in its top two grades and Huron has 26.

The issue of two-way players has also hampered depth among ESD schools. Teams like Washington, with five straight Class 11AA title game appearances, can afford to play kids on either offense or defense because of its roster size.

Even at Brandon Valley, the third-largest ESD school but second-ranked team in the state this season, the Lynx have a handful

of two-way players.

"Enrollment helps when you can play kids around the field," head coach Chad Garrow said. "But a big part of that is what they're doing in the off-season. That makes a big difference on the football field."

Garrow's Lynx, at 8-0, already own wins this season over Sioux Falls O'Gorman and Lincoln, and face Yankton tonight (Thursday) for a shot at the ESD championship. Brandon Valley was 21-12 in Garrow's first three seasons, but has progressed to a 42-11 mark over the last five — includ-

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Soccer: Bucks Show Focus, Determination In State Title Run



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The Yankton Bucks boys' soccer team poses with the championship trophy after winning the South Dakota State Soccer Tournament on Saturday in Rapid City. The Bucks shut out all three tournament opponents, including top-ranked Spearfish in the final. Team members include (front) Dylan Becker, Connor Chambers, Alexander Pacheco, Osmar Pacheco, Alex Wieseler, Zach Benjamin, Treyson Slate, (back) Coach Wes Chambers, Spencer Schade, Tully Taggart, Derek Gravholt, Cameron Luken, Andrew Hummel, Chipper Granflaten, Landon Breen, Derek Brenner, John Dannenbring, Casey Skillingsstad, Patrick Weinandt, Ricky Culver and Coach Warren Brenner. Not pictured is Coach Riley Smith.

BY NICK ROBINSON
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The Yankton Bucks club soccer team went to Rapid City last weekend for the state soccer tournament with one thing on their minds: A state championship.

The Bucks accomplished that goal with a 3-0 victory over Spearfish in the championship game.

"The goal for the team was to come out on top," sophomore Osmar Pacheco said. "We wanted to bring that trophy home. Everyone was locked in from the first minute of the tournament. We wanted to show everyone we came to play."

Yankton was entered into the South Dakota State Soccer Tournament as the No. 3 seed. The Bucks were tied with Sioux Falls Lincoln for the second seed; however they lost the tie breaker of goal differential.

"It was great, (to get the number three seed) because we had a high ranking and we didn't have to meet the number one team (Spearfish) until the end," senior striker Zach Benjamin said. "It worked out perfect for us."

The Bucks opened their championship campaign with 2-0 victory over the Watertown Arrows.

"We were surprised we were going to play Watertown," Pacheco said. "We looked forward to playing them again because we knew what to expect from them."

The Arrows surprised the state with a victory over heavily favored Sioux Falls Roosevelt in the play in game.

Yankton used two goals in the opening minutes and never looked back. The first goal came in the seventh minute where Hummel booted a goal from

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