



Gazelles' Elsie Kotalik

## Youth A Strength For Gazelles Gymnastics

BY ADRIENNE KUSEK  
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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This article originally appeared in the Dec. 2, 2013, edition of the Press & Dakotan. It has been updated to reflect the ongoing season.

With just three upperclassmen, the Yankton-Bon Homme girls' gymnastics team is young. Coach Luke Youmans said it is one of the team's biggest strengths.

"We have a lot of young girls who have been in the club program, so they already have experience before joining the high school team," Youmans said. "It will be good to have them for years to come."

Yankton-Bon Homme has one sophomore, Ashley Schweitzer, seven freshmen — Sophie Bisgard, Cheyenne Crisman, Haleigh Diede, Kaitlin Guthmiller, Nikole Knox, Morgan Mason and McKeely Merkwani — and six middle schoolers — Emily Duffek, Alexa Griffith, Samantha Kortan, Cameron Spect, Hannah Vetter and Lauren Vik — competing this season.

Because the team is so young, Youmans is looking to seniors Elsie Kotalik and Ashtyn Haak, and junior Chelsey Hisek, to be leaders.

"These girls have been in the program for years. I hope they will help the younger ones make the transition to high school athletics," Youmans said.

Last year at the State Meet, Yankton-Bon Homme placed seventh.

"Realistically, I want to be a top five team at state this year," Youmans said.

Injury has set them back for the first half of the season but, Youmans expects the team get

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**GYMNASTICS**

**Gazelles 2013-14 Schedule**

Dec. 2	vs. Mitchell/Washington	
Dec. 7	Stouff Falls Inv.	
Dec. 9	vs. Mitchell (VIMS)	
Dec. 10	Lincoln/At Mitchell	
Dec. 12	vs. Roosevelt/O'Gorman	6:30 p.m.
Dec. 16	at Wagner	6:30 p.m.
Dec. 20-21	Mitchell Inv.	TBD
Jan. 11	Brookings Inv.	noon
Jan. 18	Pierre Inv.	noon
Jan. 23	vs. Vermillion (VIMS)	6:30 p.m.
Jan. 28	vs. O'Gorman/Wash.	6:30 p.m.
Feb. 8	ESD (Mitchell)	noon

State — Feb. 21-22 at Aberdeen

# Bucks Look To Build In Second Season Under Haynes

BY EMILY NIEBRUGGE  
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Yankton's J.J. Hejna (24)

After a heartbreaking end to their last season, the Bucks are hoping to use the experience to their benefit.

Head coach Chris Haynes, now in his second year of coaching, said he believes the experience will be beneficial.

"Our five seniors are good young men who have been looking forward to this year for a long time," he said.

"Their leadership, along with good camaraderie as a whole, will be an asset we count on this year."

Senior JJ Hejna said because of the structured offseason, this season is looking to go even better.

"During that first season we were in between coaches so we didn't exactly know what to do in the offseason," he said.

"This one was really structured by coach Haynes — we went to camps, we had a lot of open gyms, we got a lot better with fundamentals and we got better with shooting. The individual stuff got a lot better."

Hejna is also looking forward to building off last season.

"You just have to build off of what you've done in the past," he said. "Last year was coach Haynes' first year, and I'm sure it wasn't exactly what he wanted it to be, but we just want to keep improving, and that's the biggest thing. If we keep improving we're going to get to where we want to go."

Haynes also knows improvement will be a priority.

"If we can improve as the season goes on will feel that we can be very competitive in an extremely difficult district and region, and we hope we can represent our community and school in a positive manner both here and when we travel across the state," he said. "The journey ahead of us will no doubt have its up and downs, but we look forward to being together as a team for the next few months."

Hejna said he team is gearing up to focus on defense, something they have always focused on.

"The biggest thing for us is always defense," he said. "You work really hard on your offense during the season, but defense is a lot more of a team thing and getting together to work out timing. It's usually our biggest emphasis the majority of the year."

Haynes said his team has been working hard already. "The guys have been working extremely hard to get ready for not only the season opener, but more importantly instituting the backbone of what will be needed for the entire season," he said. "If we can continue to improve and stay healthy we feel that we can be very competitive against as strong of a schedule as anyone in the state plays."

You can follow Emily Niebrugge on Twitter at [twitter.com/ENiebrugge](https://twitter.com/ENiebrugge). Discuss this story at [www.yankton.net](http://www.yankton.net).

**BASKETBALL**

**Bucks 2013-14 Schedule**

Dec. 13	vs. Watertown	7 p.m.
Dec. 17	at Huron	7 p.m.
Dec. 20	at S.F. Washington	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 4	at Mitchell	7 p.m.
Jan. 7	vs. Brookings	7 p.m.
Jan. 10	at Harrisburg	7 p.m.
Jan. 11	vs. Brandon Valley	7 p.m.
Jan. 14	vs. S.F. Lincoln	8 p.m.
Jan. 17	vs. Pierre	7 p.m.
Jan. 24	at Watertown	7 p.m.
Jan. 25	at Aberdeen Central	4:30 p.m.
Jan. 31	vs. Mitchell	7 p.m.
Feb. 1	vs. Huron	7 p.m.
Feb. 4	at Brookings	7 p.m.
Feb. 6	vs. Harrisburg	7 p.m.
Feb. 8	at S.F. O'Gorman	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 10	at Brandon Valley	7 p.m.
Feb. 15	vs. Aberdeen Central	4:30 p.m.
Feb. 18	vs. S.F. Roosevelt	8 p.m.
Feb. 21	at Pierre	7 p.m.

State — March 20-22 at Rapid City

# Yankton Girls Enter Season Hungry To Improve

BY EMILY NIEBRUGGE  
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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This article originally appeared in the Dec. 10, 2013, edition of the Press & Dakotan.

The Yankton Gazelles girls' basketball team has been preparing since March for its upcoming season.

Head coach Doug Pesicka said he has been looking at the kids coming back and the kids coming back to the program.

"You start preparing for your upcoming season when your previous one ends," he said.

Part of that, Pesicka said, is keeping it simple as the program continues to grow and build off previous seasons. "Our focus from day one

has been getting really good at a couple of things," he said. "Then maybe after Christmas we can continue to build on that."

"There's a real slim, narrow margin of error for us. We'll have to be efficient, we'll have to be disciplined and we'll have to execute night in and night out at both ends of the floor."

Returning starter Morgan Tessier said she and her teammates have been working hard during practice, and is ready to compete.

"We're a little bit young," she said. "We only have five seniors this year, but with that we're going to outwork our opponents and that's what's going to put us ahead."

Pesicka has noticed the



Yankton's Andi Sprakel (3)

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## Wynot

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The key in the Wynot defense is simple: Pressure.

"Usually coming into the game, we knew who their ball handlers are and who can't handle it well," Schulte said. "So that's who we want getting the ball."

"We want to fluster them." Even with having to replace eight seniors from last

season, the Lady Blue Devils are committed to their press with a roster that Wieseler says can go nine or 10 deep.

Schulte and Bruening highlight a roster that will also include Jenna Heine (Jr.), Kristi Bruening (Jr.), Lacey Heimes (Jr.), Olivia Wieseler (So.), Danielle Wieseler (So.) and Sonya Hochstein (So.). Wynot also has four freshman in Carissa Kuchta (Fr.), Holly Lauer (Fr.), Cortney Arkfeld (Fr.) and Skylar Arkfeld (Fr.).

"Our younger kids are

fairly athletic, which plays into that style," coach Wieseler said. "Defensively, I think we'll be OK; very athletic. We'll make our mistakes, but the bright side is we have some athletes."

"You can't change athleticism, but you can hopefully change fundamentals," he added. "Those things can improve throughout the course of a season."

One thing that won't change — at least not any time soon — is the target on Wynot's backs. Not that the

Lady Blue Devils are overly concerned with that, but as three-time defending champions, they're the top dogs.

"The pressure will always be there," Schulte said. "But I like to use it as a motivational thing. Like, 'Hey, we better get it done.'"

To challenge itself, Wynot will once again play a tough schedule this season, with six games against Class D1 competition and six against C2 teams — there could be more in various tournaments.

"It's nice to know people

look up to us, it makes you work harder to keep yourselves there," Brittany Bruening said. "You want to be number one and stay there."

You can follow Jeremy Hoeck on Twitter at [twitter.com/jhoeck](https://twitter.com/jhoeck). Discuss this story at [www.yankton.net](http://www.yankton.net).

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