

Yankton Grad Smith Ready To Take Helm Of Bucks

BY JEREMY HOECK
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Riley Smith got the news in April.

He was getting his long-awaited chance to lead his alma mater's wrestling program.

The 31-year-old Yankton native was promoted to replace Ryan Hage, who resigned in April as head coach of the Yankton High School program.

"I'm not going to lie, I was pretty excited," Smith said during a pre-season practice in the YHS wrestling room, where his athletes were preparing for their season opener two days later.

Smith, a 2003 YHS and 2007 Mount Marty College graduate, returned to his hometown in 2011 after teaching and helping with the wrestling program at Rapid City Stevens.

He then served as an assistant coach under Hage.

Now, it's Smith's turn to lead the Bucks.

"You don't always get those opportunities to get to coach where you got to wrestle and to carry on those traditions that you were a part of," he said.

As a wrestler under former Yankton coach Murray McGlone, Smith recorded a career record of 79-29, but it was his desire to lead that eventually led him to serving as a head coach.

"For a long time, I wanted



Riley Smith, center, was named head wrestling coach for Yankton High School in April. The 2003 Yankton and 2007 Mount Marty alumnus ranked among the Bucks' all-time leaders during his wrestling career, and now begins his first season at the Bucks' helm.

to be a teacher," Smith said. "And then just with my love of sports, being a coach is something I always wanted to pursue."

Smith got an early start in the sport, thanks to those – at times – good-natured bouts with his brother, Sean, while they were growing up in Yankton.

"Before I was ever even on a mat, my brothers and I would wrestle all the time," Smith said. "My parents would have some pretty good stories about us wrestling around."

"My brother Sean started wrestling, so I wanted to do it too," he added. Sean is an assistant coach for the Rapid City Stevens program.

Now the ninth coach in YHS wrestling history (and only the fourth since 1988), Smith is in a position where he can develop his own culture for the Bucks. Smith is, though, quick to point out that he had the opportunity to learn from a number of talented coaches, such as McGlone and Hage, as well as Rick Jensen (the first four-time Class A champion in South Dakota), Brian Moser and Sean Smith.

The key, Smith said, is to use that experience to mold his own style.

"You take bits and pieces of everything they've done, and then you put your own philosophy into it," he said. "You can develop a really good thing."

And so far, his wrestlers like what he's doing.

"We definitely liked him as an assistant and so far we definitely like him as a head

coach," senior Spencer Huber said. "I'm glad to have him instead of some random, new guy."

Huber, who came into the season needing four wins to break the school record for career victories, pointed to Smith's off-season and practice regimes as proof that the Bucks are on the rise.

"It's definitely intense, and he's definitely pushing us, but in different ways," Huber said. "It's more for strength and being ready for matches."

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getting quite a few more in this year."

Because of the number of returning wrestlers to the team this season, Yankton will be able to fill out a full lineup for dual events, according to Smith.

That's certainly a change from previous seasons.

"That's unusual for us, but it's good," Huber said. "Those open (weights) really swing the points the other way."

Yankton's annual home invitational is Feb. 6, with the Region 2A tournament set for Feb. 18-19 in Harrisburg.

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Gazelles Look To Build On Eight-Win Season

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK
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A season ago, the Yankton Gazelles won eight games, doubling their victory total of the previous season. This year, with all but one starter back, the Gazelles have higher expectations.

Yankton looks to take another step forward under second-year head coach Trey Krier in 2015-16 when the season begins Dec. 11 at Mitchell.

The Gazelles (8-15) return eight of the nine players who played in 10 or more games last season, including seven who started at least one game. The team built on that experience in the off-season, according to Krier.

"We had a really good summer. Our team camps and our open gyms did exactly what we wanted them to do," he said. "We got girls in the gym and got them to continue to do some of the things that we harped on for 45 practices and 23 games last year."

Seniors Becky Frick (7.6 ppg, 3.8 rpg, 32 assists), Sophie Drotzmann (4.9 ppg, 5.4 rpg, 25 assists) and Brianna Benjamin (1.9 ppg, 1.7 rpg, 37 assists) return, as do juniors Lindsey Hale (9.9 ppg, 2.7 rpg, 41 assists, 30 steals), Madason Tessier (5.8 ppg, 2.7 rpg, 28 steals), Josie Saylor (4.8 ppg, 3.4 rpg) and Kami Cornemann (4.9 ppg, 5.4 rpg, 25 assists).

"We return a majority of the minutes from last year," Krier said. "We are still very raw, there is still a long ways to go, but it's nice to be able to continue things that we talked about last year with a lot of the girls that we had last year."

That chemistry has made it easier to come together on the court this season, according to Frick.

"A lot of us have been playing together since we were in middle school. We know each other very well," she said. "We know where everyone is on the floor each time. It's just fun playing with a group of girls that are



Yankton's Becky Frick (14)

pretty much like your best friends, a family."

Sophomore Emily Oswald (0.5 ppg, 0.8 rpg) also returns after breaking into the rotation in the second half of last season.

"Emily got some minutes last year at the end of the year because of some injuries," Krier said. "She's going to be a girl that is going to mix into our group right away."

The Gazelles graduated Andi Sprakel (5.5 ppg, 3.2 rpg, 40 assists; now playing softball at Dakota Wesleyan) and Sarah Rockne (1.9 ppg, 2.6 rpg, lost to injury after eight games), and will be without Cornemann for part of the season due to an injury

suffered this past summer, the squad will be bolstered by sophomore transfer Bailey Kortan.

"Bailey has the potential to add to our depth in the backcourt as well," Krier said. "We're going to be able

BASKETBALL		
Dec. 11	at Mitchell	6:30 p.m.
Dec. 15	vs. Brookings	6:15 p.m.
Dec. 17	at Harrisburg	6:15 p.m.
Dec. 19	at Brandon Valley	5:15 p.m.
Dec. 22	at S.F. Washington	5:45 p.m.
Jan. 2	vs. Pierre	4:15 p.m.
Jan. 9	vs. Aberdeen Central	5 p.m.
Jan. 12	vs. S.F. Lincoln	6:15 p.m.
Jan. 16	at Watertown	5:15 p.m.
Jan. 19	at S.F. O'Gorman	6:30 p.m.
Jan. 23	vs. Huron	4:15 p.m.
Jan. 26	at Brookings	6:15 p.m.
Jan. 28	vs. Harrisburg	6:15 p.m.
Feb. 2	vs. S.F. Roosevelt	6:15 p.m.
Feb. 6	at Aberdeen Central	5 p.m.
Feb. 9	vs. Brandon Valley	6:15 p.m.
Feb. 11	at Huron	6:30 p.m.
Feb. 13	at Pierre	5:15 p.m.
Feb. 20	vs. Watertown	4:15 p.m.
Feb. 23	vs. Mitchell	6:15 p.m.
Feb. 26	District 2AA Play-In	7 p.m.
Feb. 28, Mar. 3	District 2AA	7 p.m.
March 7	Region 1AA	7 p.m.
March 17-19	State AA at Sioux Falls	

to run eight or nine girls deep, which is a good thing in AA basketball."

Juniors Linze Cowman and sophomores Anna Savey, Holly Hicks and Aurora Papstein, who all saw limited action a season ago, also return. Freshmen Jessica Reinahrtd and Maddy Hochstein are also on the varsity roster to start the season.

"Our numbers aren't very good again, but they are better than they were last year," Krier said.

The Gazelles play five games in the first 12 days of the season, including four on the road and ending at defending state champions Sioux Falls Washington.

"Just getting our legs under us to start with, whether we're starting off with a lot of success or whether we don't do as good as we want to,"

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