

Yankton Softball

# Gazelles Aim High In First Season Under Velk

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This article originally appeared in the Aug. 14 edition of the Press & Dakotan. It has been updated to reflect the ongoing season.

The Yankton Gazelles softball team returns several top players from a squad that went 17-12 a year ago.

First-year head coach Kim Velk hopes that experience will push the Gazelles even further this season.

The varsity squad is being kept small this year with the goal of providing more overall opportunities to compete for athletes.

"We have enough to have three teams (varsity, junior varsity, sophomore) at the high school level," Velk said. "We want our JV and sophomore kids to get as much playing time as they can, develop their skills so they can be on varsity with us."

While Yankton is fielding three teams at the high school level, they are being treated as one unit, Velk said.

"One thing we've been stressing is that we are one team, whether it's JV, varsity, sophomore, middle school," she said. "We



## GAZELLES SOFTBALL (4-0)

8/16	vs. S.F. Jefferson	W 8-2, W 8-5
8/17	at Mitchell	W 11-9, W 15-2
8/24	at Sioux Falls Lincoln	(late)
8/26	vs. O'Gorman	(late)
8/31	at S.F. Roosevelt	DH, 6 p.m.
9/3-4	Rapid City Trip	TBA
9/9	at Watertown	DH, 6 p.m.
9/13	vs. S.F. Washington	DH, 6 p.m.
9/14	vs. Brookings	DH, 6 p.m.
9/18	ESD Tour. (Site TBA)	TBA
9/20	vs. Harrisburg	DH, 6 p.m.
9/23	at Brandon Valley	DH, 6 p.m.
10/1-2	State (Sioux Falls)	TBA

are going to do a lot of shifting between teams throughout the season. We want girls to continue to work hard."

The Gazelles will primarily rely on junior Grace Behrns (9-6, 5.13 ERA, 67 K in 75 IP; .291, 4 doubles, 10 RBI) and senior Regan Garry in the pitching circle this season.

The other eight positions in the field will be filled by a mix of versatile athletes: seniors Addison Binde (.357, 4 HR, 7 doubles, 2 triples, 19 RBI), Annika Gordon (.392, 3 HR, 7 doubles, 2 triples, 24 RBI), Paige Hatch,

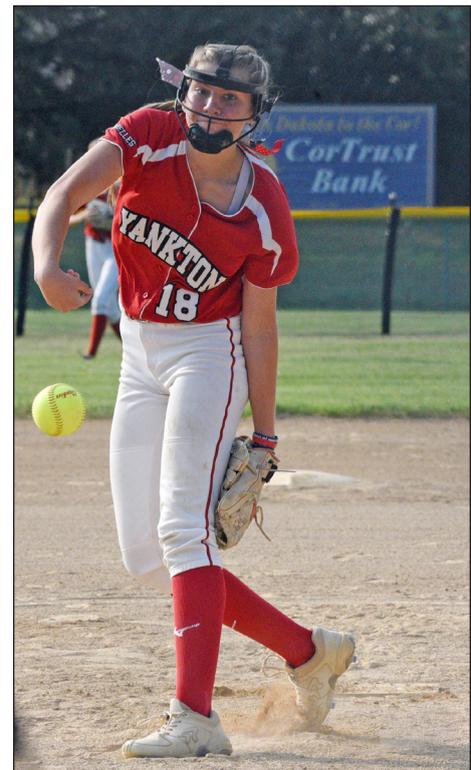
Lainie Keller (.267, 2 doubles, 8 RBI) and Camryn Zoeller, juniors Elle Feser (.461, 6 HR, 6 doubles, 4 triples, 29 RBI), Hannah Sailer, Brooklyn Townsend (.311, 2 HR, 11 RBI) and Tori Vellek (.286, 9 RBI), and sophomore Olivia Binde.

"We really do have a lot of versatile players, players who are not strictly a catcher or a first baseman or an outfielder," Velk said. "We may move some players out of their summer (travel team) positions to fall positions that help the team more."

Yankton opened the season on Aug. 16, sweeping the newly-opened Sioux Falls Jefferson in its debut. The Gazelles have a doubleheader scheduled against each Class A opponent, leading up to state Oct. 1-2 in Sioux Falls.

For the Gazelles, the bar is set high. "With us having such good athletes and with how well they work with one another, we have high expectations," Velk said. "We expect to be in the running for a state championship."

Coaching varsity with Velk are Doug Marquardt and Tyler Behrens (pitching). Gazelles alumni Elsie Marquardt and Faith Sparks will handle the JV program, with Sam Stange and Michael Suhr running the sophomore team.



Grace Behrns and the Yankton Gazelles are off to a 4-0 start.

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# Bucks Golf

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tion in the state comes from the Sioux Falls schools, including the defending state champion Sioux Falls Lincoln. Sime said outside of the Sioux Falls schools, Rapid City Stevens, Aberdeen and the 2020 State Runners-up Watertown will be competitive again this season.

Yankton is hoping their young group can compete in the top three at the nine school ESD Conference meet and place inside the top six at the 19 team state meet to bring some hardware back to Yankton High School.

"We're looking for the six best that are going to compete in the end, that's what we're looking at," Sime said. "We have good numbers all the way through high school and



## BUCKS BOYS' GOLF

8/16-17	Warrior-Lynx Inv.	8 of 16 (663)
8/20	vs. Lincoln/Washington	2 of 3 (315)
8/24	vs. Brandon Valley	(late)
8/27	Huron Inv. (Broadland Creek)	10 a.m.
8/31	Marchand Cup (Lake View, Mitchell)	2 p.m.
9/10	Yankton Inv. (Hillcrest)	10 a.m.
9/13	Brookings Inv. (Edgebrook)	10 a.m.
9/17	Mitchell Inv. (Lake View)	10:30 a.m.
9/21	Watertown Inv. (Cattail Crossing)	10 a.m.
9/25	ESD (Cattail Crossing, Watertown)	10 a.m.
9/28	at Huron (Spring Creek)	11 a.m.
10/4-5	State AA (Broadland Creek, Huron)	9 a.m.

middle school. We're just looking at having a good season and trying to improve all the way through so that we can be competitive in the end."

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