

# Potts Excited To Lead Bucks In Title Defense

BY ERIC BEAN

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Yankton Bucks senior basketball player Landon Potts is looking forward to taking on more responsibility as one of the leaders of the defending Class AA State Champions.

"It's awesome," Potts said. "This is what I wanted. What every kid wants is to be a leader of a basketball team when they're a senior. I'm excited for it. We've been working this summer and I'm ready for the season to start. "You have to show up every day and lead."

Potts is the only player from last year's championship squad that played in all 24 games. During the regular season and SoDak 16 contest, he averaged 5.4 points per game.

"It was a blast all year with a fun group (last season)," Potts said. "It was fun to be around everybody all the time."

Potts came in off the bench in the first half of the

state championship game against Mitchell. He hit two crucial 3-pointers to help Yankton to a 36-30 halftime lead on its way to a 65-61 victory. He relished the opportunity that was given to him in a pivotal moment by Bucks head coach Chris Haynes.

"That's what I've dreamt about since I was a little kid," Potts said. "To actually do it was awesome. My confidence went way up. If you can do it in the state championship, you can do it in any other game. There are no nerves going into any other games because you've already been in the biggest setting. It was a great experience."

It was the culmination of hard work that started from first grade when Potts joined the "Young Bucks" program.

"I worked all the way up and went through all the camps," he said. "I played middle school, freshman, sophomore, junior varsity. Last year was my first year on varsity."

Haynes mentored Potts in

those camps and the senior is looking forward to having him as coach for his senior season.

During his junior year, Potts felt comfortable on the varsity court after the first few games he played. In his opinion, his breakthrough moment came in Yankton's 77-68 victory at Tea Feb. 16.

"I hit two 3-pointers in the first half. The second one I shot off the dribble," he said.

"Knowing I can shoot those shots gives me confidence."

Despite the new look Yankton's varsity roster presents in 2023-24, the goal remains the same for Potts: to lead the Bucks to the Class AA State Tournament Mar. 14-16, 2024 in Sioux Falls.

"Everyone knows what we did last year and everyone wants to get back there," he said.

Potts and fellow senior Tucker Gilmore organized open gyms throughout the summer to help the younger



P&D FILE PHOTO

Yankton's Landon Potts, 21, applies pressure to Spearfish's Tayte Schatz during a game in the 2022-23 season.

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and chemistry down on the offensive end and people (will) settle into their roles," Haynes said. "There's no doubt we're not going to have a guy that can just get 25 points and make plays for everybody else. We're going to have to do it as a unit."

The Bucks will have eight healthy players in the rotation to start the season. He was impressed with the dedication the whole team showed through the offseason despite participating in other sports.

"They were lifting and going to conditioning," Haynes said. "They have jobs, girlfriends and family vacations, so they were busy in the summer. To still be able to get in the gym as much as they did was a great thing to see. That's going to pay benefits as we move on through the winter."

The Bucks open the season at 7:30 p.m. Friday against the Harrisburg Tigers at Yankton High School. Haynes called the early portion of the schedule "brutal" and admitted the Bucks might go through some growing pains early in the season.

"Our guys need varsity minutes to get acclimated to the physicality and speed of the game," he said. "The biggest jump to make is from JV to varsity. The speed and physicality takes (on) another level."

"We've got to continue to improve ulti-

BOYS' BASKETBALL		
Dec. 8	vs. Harrisburg	7:30 p.m.
Dec. 12	vs. S.F. Washington	7 p.m.
Dec. 15	at S.F. Lincoln	7 p.m.
Dec. 21	vs. Aberdeen Central	7 p.m.
Dec. 30	at Brookings	1:30 p.m.
Jan. 2	vs. Huron	7 p.m.
Jan. 5	at Mitchell	7:30 p.m.
Jan. 12	vs. Watertown	7 p.m.
Jan. 13	vs. O'Gorman	2 p.m.
Jan. 16	vs. S.F. Jefferson	7 p.m.
Jan. 19	at S.F. Roosevelt	7 p.m.
Jan. 26	at Brandon Valley	7 p.m.
Jan. 27	at Douglas	8 p.m.
Feb. 2	at Pierre	7 p.m.
Feb. 9	vs. R.C. Stevens	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 10	vs. R.C. Central	2 p.m.
Feb. 13	at S.F. Christian	8 p.m.
Feb. 15	vs. Tea Area	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 23	at Spearfish	9 p.m.
Feb. 24	at Sturgis	3:30 p.m.
Mar. 2	SoDak 16	TBD
Mar. 14-16	State AA (Sioux Falls)	TBD

mately to get ourselves back in a position to get to the state tournament."

Still, Haynes beamed with excitement when talking about how the season may progress with the new group.

"We've got another group of kids that are good kids, work hard and are competitors," he said. "We're looking forward to working with them on a daily basis."

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