

Baseball: Kampshoff Ready To Lead Bucks In 2024

BY ERIC BEAN

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Beyond his athletic prowess regardless of whether he's on a baseball or football field, Yankton Bucks head club baseball coach Drew Lawrence is most impressed with the level-headed mentality Lucas Kampshoff displays in athletic competition.

"Physically, he's capable of doing almost anything, but he doesn't ever get up or down, which is really good in baseball," Lawrence said. "It was good for the football team when he was the quarterback. He doesn't get too high or low. He's able to stay even-keeled. That's his main strength, besides the fact he's ridiculously talented at baseball and other sports as well. He's very smooth defensively and at the plate, so it should be a fun year for him."

Kampshoff, a senior who batted .412 with 20 RBI and two home runs during the Bucks' 2023 club season, is excited to play with different players this season after being a part of a Bucks team that featured numerous seniors last season.

"It's going to be a lot of fun," Kampshoff said. "It's going to be, I wouldn't say a tough start, but we start earlier this season (Apr. 4 vs. Vermillion). Hopefully, there's not as much easing into things so we'll be ready to go right away."

Not easing into things is a goal of Kampshoff's as well, as injuries forced him to play first base or be the designated hitter for most of the 2023 club and Legion season.

"I was bummed out last season," he said. "I wasn't able to pitch or play the field very much. This year, I'll hopefully be back healthy sooner than later and be able to contribute in the field."

Lawrence agreed that 2023 "had to be a tough year" for Kampshoff.

"We were able to sprinkle him in at first, but it had to be tough knowing that he couldn't get out there and pitch," Lawrence said. "He couldn't go play shortstop or third like we wanted him to."

Still, with the Bucks finishing 13-6 in 2023, Kampshoff's contribution to that team was invaluable in Lawrence's eyes.

"Being able to incorporate him at first base helped," Lawrence said. "He's excited to go out there and compete. I'm happy for him

and his family (that) he's able to hopefully come out and be healthy all year (in 2024)."

Kampshoff is hoping to pitch and play his natural position of shortstop, as well as third base, this season.

"When I started off in Reds 13-U, I was third base," he said. "Ever since then, I've been a shortstop, except I've switched back to third base at Legion. I'll try to play shortstop this year since we lost Drew (Ryken) from last year, so hopefully I'll step up in that position."

Lawrence added Kampshoff will "probably be able to pitch" at some point during the Legion season this summer.

"We're going to make sure everyone's comfortable and safe doing it and make sure we put him in the best regards," Lawrence said.

Kampshoff is excited to play with the younger players on the team and learned a lot from Drew Ryken and the other seniors last season on how to lead.

"They were just teaching the young guys how to do it the right way with how to lead," Kampshoff said.

Kampshoff is excited to play with a new group that includes juniors Matthew Sheldon and Mark Kathol, both pitchers for the Bucks, as well as the senior group that includes Frankie In't Veld, Austin Gobel and Sean Turner.

"I love playing with Mark and Matthew," Kampshoff said. "They're great guys and fun to have around. I'm also super-excited to play with all my other senior guys because I haven't played with them in quite some time. It's been 3-4 years since I've played with any of them. I'm excited to get a chance to play with them again."

"It's super-fun. I enjoy all their company and things they do for this team."

Kampshoff, whose commitment to the Mount Marty Lancers baseball team was announced Mar. 28, has never tried to mold his game after any particular player, but supports the Chicago Cubs.

"I've been a Cubs fan most of my life," he said. "I liked watching Kris Bryant play back when he was with them. I like Dansby Swanson now that he's a Cub."

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Regardless of the changing lineup, Lawrence stated the expectations for the Bucks are still the same.

"We are just trying to get better every single day," he said. "We tried to do that last year: get better this practice, game and learn from it. If they can do that, then learn and continue to get better, the wins and losses usually take care of themselves."

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P&D FILE PHOTO

Lucas Kampshoff returns for Yankton after batting .412 with two home runs and 20 RBI in the 2023 club high school season. Kampshoff will continue his baseball career at Mount Marty University beginning next fall.

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Field at Bob Tereshinski Stadium, where Yankton will begin its journey to try to qualify for the Class A state tournament, May 24-25 at Sioux Falls Stadium. The tournament takes on a different format, as eight teams will compete in Sioux Falls instead of four this season.

"We have a chance every year to be able to get to the state tournament," Lawrence said. "We should be able to this year."

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