

Season Preview | Yankton Girls' Soccer

Gazelles Aim To Improve On Four-Win '23 Run

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK

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A young Yankton Gazelles soccer squad will look to build off their experience from a year ago as they open the 2024 season today (Friday).

"We do have a lot of pieces back, a lot of game experience from last year. It is definitely going to be beneficial for our squad," said Yankton head coach Tyler Schuring. "They went out of last season with a sour taste in their mouth. They put in a lot of work in the off-season, in the summer. I think they're ready to go, ready to compete."

The Gazelles' experience starts on the defensive line, led by all-Eastern South Dakota Conference senior defender Tessa Gillies. Seniors Chloe Foote and Carly Cap also return on defense. Junior Hannah Kruger transitions from in goal to in the field. Sophomores Olivia Woods and Addison Brodeur are also expected to contribute.

"That defense is definitely the area where we have the most experience," Schuring said. "We've got three really solid senior defend-

Girls' Soccer (3-2)		
Aug. 16	at R.C. Stevens	L 1-5
Aug. 17	at R.C. Central	W 4-2
Aug. 20	vs. Watertown	W 4-1
Aug. 22	at Harrisburg	L 0-1
Aug. 27	vs. S.F. Jefferson	W 5-0
Aug. 29	at Tea Area	(late)
Sept. 3	at Brookings	4 p.m.
Sept. 5	vs. O'Gorman	6 p.m.
Sept. 10	at Brandon Valley	5 p.m.
Sept. 14	vs. S.F. Washington	9 a.m.
Sept. 17	vs. Huron	4 p.m.
Sept. 19	at Mitchell	6 p.m.
Sept. 24	vs. Pierre	4 p.m.
Sept. 28	at Aberdeen Central	2 p.m.
Oct. 8	AA First Round	
Oct. 12	AA Quarterfinals	
Oct. 15	AA Semifinals	
Oct. 19	AA Final (Yankton)	5 p.m.

ers back there, a nice junior defender and a couple sophomore defenders."

The emergence of Elaina Mohnen in goal allowed Yankton to shift Kruger to the defensive front line.

"Elaina's done a really good job over the past couple years of developing her skills," Schuring said. "She's got the mental fortitude, even as a sophomore, to step in there and really be a strong part of our back line.

SOUTH DAKOTA BOYS' SOCCER

Dakota Valley

COACH: Osbin Rogel
ASSISTANT: Luis Trejo
VITALS: Class A
LAST YEAR: The Panthers went 1-6-3 in 2023.
STARTERS: Landen Adams (8th, F/D); Brady Braun-schweig (Fr., MF/F); Bryan Cardona So. (MF/F); Evan Christensen (8th, MF/D); Reid Herbold (Fr., GK); Yahya Luqman (Fr., D/MF); Joey Milner (So., D); Kshitij Patil (Fr., D); Ben Philips (So., D); Cruz Trejo (8th, F/MF); Mark Wren (Sr., F/MF)

Freeman Academy

(Freeman Academy, Freeman, Marion, Parker)

COACH: Nathan Epp
ASSISTANTS: Paul Ortman, Andre Eisenbeis
VITALS: Class A
RETURNING: Dustin Flores (Sr., D); David Ilunga (Jr., M); Domani Butler (So., D); Justin Escobar (So., M/F); Emma Tuschen (So., M); Simon Wiersema (Fr., D/GK); Lesther Artica Rocha (Fr., F); Alexis Gonzales (Fr., M)

NEWCOMERS: Jax Kaufman (Fr., D/GK); Rylen Tommeraus (Fr., M/F); Derek Escobar (Fr., D); Persie Avila (Fr., M); Daniel Ilunga (So., D); Guss Timmerman (8th, D); Breton Ross (8th, D); Brandon Loaiza (8th, D/M)

Vermillion

COACH: Curt Nelson
ASSISTANTS: Hari Kadarkaraisamy, Dustin Sockness, Sully Gautier
VITALS: Class A
LAST YEAR: The Tanagers went 9-4, falling to Tea Area in the semifinals
RETURNING: James Nissen (Sr., D; All-State Honorable Mention); Michael Roob (Sr., F); Aaron Bingen (Sr., D); Ian Job (Jr., F); Kamil Schorn (Jr., M); Corbin Heckens (Jr., GK); Teagan Wells (Fr., F); Landon Sopoci (Fr., M); Gage Beverly (Fr., M)
NEWCOMERS: Caleb Chasing Hawk (Jr., D); Adyn Koencck (So., M); Sver Ansorge-Jepsen (So., D); Gabe Haas (So., D); Alex Port (So., D); Kylar Wallin (Fr., M); Cameron Robb (Fr., GK); Maddox Standley (Fr., M)

SOUTH DAKOTA GIRLS' TENNIS

Vermillion

COACH: Kari Jensen
VITALS: Class A
LAST YEAR: The Tanagers went 5-8 in duals, then earned a fourth place finish at state. Vermillion athletes earned top-five finishes at five different flights.

RETURNING: Annika Barnett (Sr., 2nd at 1 singles, 4th at 1 doubles); Mya Halverson (Sr., 2 singles, 4th at 1 doubles); Abby Hanson (Sr., 5th at 3 singles, 2 doubles); Saige Jorgensen (Sr.); Delaney Smidt (Jr.); Katelyn Proefrock (Jr.); Evie Aune (Jr.); Sakara White-Davis (Fr., 4th at 3 doubles); Mia Barnett (Fr., 4th at 3 doubles); Katie Yoon (Fr.); Sadie Dahlhoff (Fr.); Shelan Hinseth (Fr.); Ellie Holdhusen (Fr.)

We're looking at her to make some big saves at times."

Schuring is looking to see the Gazelles' midfield group make a step forward this season.

"We've got to control the center of the field. That's something you have to do if you're going to keep yourselves in it," he said. "I think we have the players that can step in there and work to control the game."

In the midfield, the Gazelles boast seniors Eleanor Johnson, Haley Luke and Chloe Blom; juniors Faye Ireland, Ava Haar and Emily Tramp; and sophomores Lucy Johnson, Eden Wolfram, Remy Kusel and Josslyn Elwood.

Forwards for the Gazelles include junior Sienne Tacke and sophomores Iyana Becker and Auviana Seiler.

"We're changing up a few things up front and on our wings. We're going to look to be a bit more aggressive this year," Schuring said. "We transitioned to that a little bit during the summer in their camps and a couple of tournaments, and we saw some really good success there."

After going 4-9-2 a season ago, the Gazelles jump into their 2024 season. After a 5-1 loss to Rapid City Stevens, ranked third in the preseason poll, the Gazelles upended Rapid City Central, tied for fourth in that

poll, 4-2.

"This happened to be the year where the schedule changed. We dropped Douglas and Spearfish, and we picked up two really good quality opponents in the Rapid City teams," Schuring said. "I think playing them early in the year is probably one of the better times to get them."

Not only is Schuring excited for the Gazelles' prospects this season, the players are as well.

"The players are really hungry right now," he said. "I think we're going to come out and be aggressive. I think they're ready to go for that first match, no matter who they play."

After opening the season out West, Yankton returns home to beat ESD foe Watertown 4-1 before falling to two-time defending state champion Harrisburg 0-1. The schedule will include a single round-robin in ESD play, including at ESD newcomer Tea Area, and three matches against Sioux Falls opponents — Jefferson (won 5-0 on Aug. 27), O'Gorman (Sept. 5) and Washington (Sept. 14) — all at home. YHS is 3-2 on the season, as of Aug. 28.

Schuring is joined on staff this season by Kellen Moser, a Yankton High School graduate who had been teaching and coaching at Gayville-Volin in recent years.

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