Preview | Bucks Hockey

Bucks Hockey Team Looks To Build Off State Tourney Appearance

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The Yankton Bucks hockey team placed fifth at state last year and is preparing for a big season ahead. Yankton head coach Terry Pedersen expects the team to have another successful season.

"We had multiple games we lost in overtime or by one goal during the [last] season, and even in the tournament, we did well like that as well, so we're hoping to be at least in the championship bracket going forward," Terry Pedersen said.

Tucker Renken is Yankton's team captain this year. Terry Pedersen discussed the leadership and talent his captains bring to the team.

"Captain Renken is a junior, and he brings a lot of skill. He brings a lot of positivity. He leads by example and by voice; he's not scared to say something to the team or to someone if they need to hear it… He's a really good role model there."

Kaden Hunhoff and Jack Pedersen are Yankton's assistant captains, and both bring unique skills to the team.

Hunhoff brings in previous leadership experience as he returns to his role as assistant captain this year. Coach Pedersen positively reflected on Hunhoff's attitude.

"[Hunhoff] always has a lot of positivity, and he just seems to go 100% whenever he's on the ice, either in a practice or a game. He's just… a player that all the kids like to be around," Terry Pedersen said.

Yankton's other assistant captain, Jack Pedersen, leads by example and acts as a healthy presence on the team, said Terry Pedersen.

"[Jack Pedersen has] been the leading scorer the last couple years on the team, not only in goals but in assists, and so, he's just more of a steady rock and leader by example," Coach Pedersen said.

Coach Pedersen looks to his captains to keep the team together and enforce the rules. Leadership from the captains allows the team to work well together, Coach Pedersen said.

With help from his team captains, Terry Pedersen hopes to build a supportive and positive culture on the team.

"The dynamics of the team is, they're pretty loose and easy-going. They do like to work hard, and they do let their teammates know if they're not pulling as hard as they need to pull… Their dynamics basically are pretty focused, and they keep us pointed in the direction we need to go," Terry Pedersen said.

P&D FILE PHOTO

The Yankton Bucks celebrate after a goal in a home match this season. The Bucks are 3-2 on the season.

With 14 seniors and 12 juniors on the roster this year, the Bucks have a lot of experienced players. Many players have been on the team for two or three years now, Coach Pedersen said, which helps the team add new skills while setting a standard for the younger players.

"It just builds off of what they were last year, so we don't have to start over on a lot of things. A lot of things we can just polish up, and we can get better and work on other areas that we're a little more weak on. It just kind of finishes the cycle," he said.

Coach Pedersen is always looking for ways his team can improve. In preparation for the season ahead, his focus has been speed, shooting, and special teams.

"…Along with their talent and their ability and working on those things from last year, we stepped on the ice day one, I believe, right where we left off. And so that allows us to build off of the level that we achieved last year right off the bat, and our level has already increased quite a bit. And every day it just seems like it just gets better and better."

Coach Pedersen expects many players to contribute to the team's success this season. Speed, Coach Pedersen said, is one of the team's greatest strengths.

"We have a deep roster at every position. As long as we can keep the injuries down and the sickness down, we should be hitting on all cylinders from day one, and hopefully through the whole season," Coach Pedersen said.

The Bucks started the season with impressive victories over Huron (10-1), Sioux Center (15-0) and Mitchell (9-2). Rushmore swept the Bucks in back-to-back Yankton home matches, 8-1 on Nov. 30 and 4-0 on Dec. 5.

BUCKS HOCKEY (3-2)

Nov. 21	vs. Huron	W 10-1
Nov. 22	vs. Sioux Center	W 15-0
Nov. 29	vs. Mitchell	W 9-2
Nov. 30	vs. Rushmore	L 1-8
Dec. 5	vs. Rushmore	L 0-4
Dec. 6	vs. S.F. West	ppd.
Dec. 19	at Brandon Valley	8 p.m.
Dec. 20	at Huron	7:45 p.m.
Jan. 2	at S.F. West	8:15 p.m.
Jan. 4	at Sioux Center	noon
Jan. 10	at Oahe	6:15 p.m.
Jan. 11	at Oahe	1:15 p.m.
Jan. 30	vs. Brandon Valley	8 p.m.
Jan. 31	vs. Watertown	7 p.m.
Feb. 1	vs. Brookings	3 p.m.
Feb. 6	at Mitchell	8 p.m.
Feb. 13	at Brookings	8 p.m.
Feb. 14	vs. Aberdeen (SN)	8:30 p.m.
Feb. 15	vs. Aberdeen	2 p.m.
Feb. 22	vs. S.F. East	2 p.m.
Feb. 28	at S.F. East	2:15 p.m.
Mar. 1	at Watertown	12:15 p.m.
Mar. 12-14	State (Sioux Falls)	TBD

YHS Girls

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lack height. Only three players on the roster are listed taller than 5-7: Wells, Muth and Sheldon.

"We're not going to have a team that can just be slow and patient, and bully teams in the half-court," Savey said. "We have to be quick and overwhelming, using our quickness and athleticism to our advantage. We need to play urgent and relentless defense that continually is getting in the right position, is communicating and is all over the ball."

Yankton's second season under Savey began with a 61-10 victory over a young Sioux Falls Lincoln team. The Gazelles also face Harrisburg and Sioux Falls Washington before the Christmas break.

While Yankton will face several top teams early, the focus will not be who is on the other side.

"For the first games, it's got to be all about us," Savey said. "Can we buy into and find our identity on the offensive and defensive ends? We need to see that we are working towards that brand and that identity early in the year, and we can't worry too much about what another team may or may not do."

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