

Press Clippings for 8/25/2022

Girls volleyball: Fox area season preview

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Huntley's Avary DeBlicek and her teammate, Maggie Duyos, celebrate a point during their season-opening win over Crystal Lake Central on Tuesday. The Red Raiders are coming off a 28-win season and another sectional title. *Gregory Shaver/Shaw Media*

Aurora Central Catholic

Coach: Michelle Chavez (3rd season)

Last year's record: 20-15, 5-5

Top returning players: Chloe Ruge, sr., OH; Ashley Catich, sr., DS/L; Clare Dallas, sr., MH; Zoey Chavez, jr., DS/L

Top new players: Emilee Anderson, jr., OH; Ashley Collins, jr., S

Worth noting: The Chargers are coming off their first regional title in 30 years ... Coach Chavez was excited to see a big turnout from the student section for their home opener and is optimistic about the season. "The chemistry with these girls is great," Chavez said. " We have been working really hard to build this program with added new traditions. And the girls have been doing a great job coming up with them."

Bartlett

Coach: Robert Schwantz (5th season)

Last year's record: 20-14, 6-3 (3rd in the Upstate Eight)

Top returning players: Bria Lomax, sr., MH; Klaudia Bartoszewicz, sr., L; Macy Medendorp, jr., OH; Jaden Lindstrom, jr., OH; Megan Hartge, jr., RS; Caris Castaneda, jr., S

Top new players: Ashlyn Lomax, so., RS/OH; Nicole Paul, so., MH; Sarah Savoia Free, so., S

Batavia

Coach: McKenna Kelsay

Last year's record: 17-19

Top returners: Amanda Otten, sr., S; Claire Ellward, sr., MH; Madelyn Hooper, sr., OH

Top newcomers: Makayla Hamilton, sr., MH; Teagan Rokos, so., DS

Worth noting: The Bulldogs were senior-heavy last season. The graduated Kyra Taylor

arguably was their top offensive weapon. Otten, perhaps one of the top tier players in the DuKane Conference, should be in line for a big season.

Burlington Central

Coach: Julia Smagacz (first season)

Last year's record: 22-16, 9-9 FVC (fifth)

Top returners: Brooke Hoffman, sr., OH; Ashley Arceo, jr., S; Rachel Burton, sr., MB

Top newcomers: Leah Freesemann, so., OH; Brianna Gritzman, so., DS-L; Sarah Jack, so., S; Peyton Strout, fr., MB

Worth noting: Smagacz takes over for Sam Mainzer, who coached the Rockets for two years. Burlington's new coach graduated from Libertyville in 2013 and helped lead the Wildcats to fourth place in Class 4A during her senior year. She went on to play at Akron and has been a lower-level coach at Burlington since 2018. ... The Rockets will have to reload on offense after losing both of its All-FVC selections -- Addy Nava and Rylie Hahn -- to graduation. Nava paced Burlington with 325 kills. ... Hoffman will be a key returner at outside hitter and has received a handful of NCAA Division II offers. ... "BCHS volleyball has a lot of young talent coming up this year," Smagacz said. "It will be a great growth year for our program. We are looking forward to a strong season."

Cary-Grove

Coach: Patty Langanis (28th season)

Last year's record: 21-16, 10-8 FVC (fourth)

Top returners: Tricia Kennedy, sr., MB; Meg Rothermel, sr., MB; Isabelle Strader, sr., S

Top newcomers: Erin Wadzinski, sr., OH

Worth noting: The Trojans suffered a hard-fought loss to Lake Forest, 25-20, 25-22, in the Class 3A Cary-Grove Regional final and will look to be among the top teams in the FVC this season. ... Kennedy was an All-FVC pick. She is committed to Michigan Tech. The team's other all-conference selection, Mya Bajramovic, graduated and now is at West Virginia Wesleyan. ... Rothermel joins Kennedy to form a strong middle block for the Trojans, while Strader gives them good experience at setter. ... Langanis has seen a lot of positive energy already. ... "All players are working as a strong unit and there is a desire to be successful from every single athlete on this team that I have not seen in awhile at Cary-Grove," Langanis said. "This unity that they are showing should make them dangerous as the year progresses."

Crystal Lake South

Coach: Annie Moore (first season)

Last year's record: 31-6, 17-1 FVC (first)

Top returners: Emma Stowasser, sr., S; Gabby Wire, jr., OH

Top newcomers: Kaitlyn Brandt, sr., L; Olivia Christopher, sr., MB; Morgan Johnson, so., OH; Bella Toniolo, jr., OH; Kendall Brandt, so., MB

Worth noting: Annie (Fox) Moore enters her first year after Jorie Fontana resigned at the end of last season. Fontana had a 313-180 record in 14 years at South. Moore graduated from Crystal Lake Central in 2014 and was an assistant at Prairie Ridge last season. ... The Gators will look a lot different after a successful season that included FVC and Class 3A regional titles. South graduated most of its lineup. ... Wire recently committed to Wisconsin-Milwaukee and posted 193 kills, 27 aces, 144 digs and 37 blocks as a sophomore. Stowasser returns for her senior year at setter after missing significant time last season with a knee injury. ... "With all the changes the girls are experiencing with losing lots of seniors and a new coaching staff, the team is working really hard to end up back on top," Moore said. "We anticipate a very successful season. The girls know it will be a fight, but with all of their heart and hard work, we

know it's possible."

Dundee-Crown

Coach: Tiffany Dumas (second season)

Last year's record: 8-26, 1-17 FVC (10th)

Top returners: Rachel Piluski, sr., OH; Kylie Hanson, sr., S; Maddie Muhvic, sr., S-RS; Teagan Bruce, sr., DS-L; Courtney Komperda, jr., S; Audrey Prusko, jr., MB; Sydney Komperda, jr., DS-L

Top newcomers: Kiara McElroy, jr., S; Kiara Hernandez, jr., DS-L; Miana Gonzalez, jr., DS-L; Taylor Findlay, jr., OH; Megan Pearson, jr., OH; Nicole Wagner, jr., OH; Hannah Robinson, jr., RS; Allison Mathesius, so., MB; Coley Di Silvio, so., MB

Worth noting: The Chargers have finished 10th, ninth and eighth in the FVC the past three seasons. ... D-C's roster is made up of four seniors, 10 juniors and two sophomores, with many playing varsity for the first time. ... Hanson is committed to West Liberty University. Prusko was one of the team's top attackers as a sophomore. ... In addition to improvements off the court, Dumas said the Chargers have focused on creating a family-like atmosphere. She hopes their youthfulness will make for a more lively gym. ... "Having a young team will be a strength and weakness for us," Dumas said. "We have many new girls on the team and they have a lot of potential."

Geneva

Coach: Lauren Wicinski

Last year's record: 8-26

Top returners: Lauren Benson, sr, MH; Sam Vanda, so., OH

Top newcomers: Abby Buban, sr., OH; Mia Kane, sr., S/OH

Worth noting: The Vikings have a roster that has a lot of potential. It starts with Benson and Vanda, who can build off notable seasons last year. They will be a 1-2 punch in the rotation. Kane, who transferred from Kaneland in the offseason, brings a few years of varsity experience with her and will acclimate to the conference in no time.

Hampshire

Coach: Rejhan Vunic (first season)

Last year's record: 14-21, 5-13 FVC (ninth)

Top returners: Gabi Peter, sr., OH; Emily Mohr, sr., S

Top newcomers: Hailey Klein, sr., DS; Kaylee Obrzut, sr., DS; Peyton Wurtz, fr., DS; Jorah Rutter, so., S; Samantha Freeman, fr., MB; Elizabeth King, fr., MB

Worth noting: Vunic is in his first year as head coach at Hampshire and replaces Will Benenhaley, who coached the Whip-Purs for three seasons. ... Hampshire graduated its lone All-FVC selection: Jacey Lambert, now at Harding University in Searcy, Arkansas. She was the team captain and led Hampshire with 274 kills, 50 aces and 25 blocks, despite missing three weeks with an injury. ... Peter is committed to UIC and Mohr also is looking to play in college. Mohr has a chance to reach 1,000 assists before the end of her senior year. ... "I'm excited to see how these girls come together to achieve their goals," Vunic said. "We have a lot of young talent coming in and strong leadership from our upperclassmen. I think we're going to be a scrappy team. The girls are putting in the work, and you can see they are determined."

Harvest Christian

Coach: Andy Kownacki (4th season)

Last year's record: 18-17, 5-1 (first in NAC)

Top returning players: Naomi Dobrescu, sr. MH; Chace Welsh, jr. MH; Madison Tatum, jr., S; Ella Schoenberg, so., S; Alyssa Burke, so., OH; Taylor Martin, so., DS/L

Top new players: Izzy Abraham, so., OH

Worth noting: The Lions are going to be young this year, "with a lot of energy and desire," Kownacki said. He's impressed with his team's athleticism and versatility. "We have many girls that are multisport athletes, so excited to see how that works to our advantage this season," Kownacki said. "We need to focus on playing in the moment and limiting our errors. Super excited to watch the team grow this year." Repeating as conference champions is one of Harvest Christian's top goals.

Huntley

Coach: Karen Naymola (11th season)

Last year's record: 28-12, 13-5 FVC (second)

Top returners: Avary DeBlieck, sr., MB; Maggie Duyos, sr., S; Ally Panzloff, sr., OH; Emily Willis, sr., MB; Luma Acevedo, sr., DS-L; Georgia Watson, so., OH; Lizzy Williams, jr., OH

Top newcomers: Morgan Jones, jr., OH; Alex Goritz, so., DS

Worth noting: The Red Raiders won Class 4A regional and sectional titles last fall. They have now won five straight regional and two straight sectional titles. Huntley lost to No. 1-seeded Edwardsville, 25-12, 25-21, in the DeKalb supersectional. ... The Raiders have four Division I commits and lost only one starter to graduation. ... DeBlieck, who is committed to Miami (Fla.), had 276 kills and 83 total blocks. Acevedo broke the school record with 681 digs last year and also had 37 aces. Panzloff (Brown) had 264 kills, 23 aces, 293 digs and 66 total blocks. Duyos (Austin Peay) led one of the area's top offenses with 664 assists, 460 digs, 35 aces and 47 kills. ... Jones transferred from Crystal Lake South. The Indiana commit had 125

kills, 24 aces and 164 digs last fall for the Gators. ... Willis will play at McHenry County College. ... "The girls have continued to work hard and are just excited to compete," Naymola said. "Some of our strengths are our offense. It's fast, and we have added even more offensive threats. We can attack out of the back row, and we have Maggie who is a very offensive setter."

Jacobs

Coach: Mike Depa (second season)

Last year's record: 25-11, 12-6 FVC (third)

Top returners: Sara Wasner, sr., OH; Isabella Sychala, sr., RS; Kate Wilson, sr., DS; Yvonne Iskrev, sr., MB; Teagan Van Stone, jr., RS; Ali Pierre, 5-7, jr., MB; Gracie Breeze, jr., DS; Cassie Gorrity, jr., OH

Top newcomers: Aurora Rodella, sr., S; Meghan Retzler, jr., S; Abigail Deacon, jr., S; Jordan Miller, so., OH

Worth noting: The Golden Eagles won their first regional title since 2008 with a win over St. Charles North and took a big step in the FVC, finishing third behind only Crystal Lake South and Huntley. ... Jacobs lost a lot of firepower from last year, including Rachel Kaczorowski, who had 644 assists, 164 kills, 49 aces and 306 digs. Also gone are Jaclyn Poirier (263 kills, 35 aces), Meredith Giustino (340 digs) and Ireland Van Stone (216 kills, 34 aces). ... The Eagles have three new setters this year. Depa likes the depth of his roster despite losing a large senior class to graduation. 11 of the 19 players on varsity to start the season are juniors. ... "I'm very excited for the season," Depa said. "We have such a great group of girls who love the game of volleyball and are very hard workers. I expect us to compete and challenge every team we play. What excites me about this group is how well rounded and competitive the position battles are. I think this will help us become better players and a better team everyday."

Kaneland

Coach: Cynthia Violet

Last year's record: 34-4

Top returners: Brenna Ebert, sr., S; Gabriella Gatz, sr., OH

Top newcomers: Carmella Rio, jr., OH; Tori Vanderhorn, sr., DS

Worth noting: The Knights graduated an immense amount of talent, including Maddie Buckley, Bella Rio and Mackenzie Ewen, after last season's postseason run. Mia Kane also transferred to Geneva. Replenishing that production will be key.

Rosary

Coach: Franky Martinez

Last year's record: 18-18, 5-4

Top returners: Sarah Schmidt, sr., S; Jessica Hirner, sr., OH; Lola Blankenheim, sr., L

Top newcomers: Lillian Riddiford, fr., OH; Reese Gilla, so., OH

Worth noting: Rosary returns six players from last season, headlined by Schmidt and Hirner. How the Royals plan to replace the production of graduated senior Kylie Loquercio, who had 431 kills, will be key. The Royals are in a new athletic conference, the Girls Catholic Athletic Conference, and project to be competitive. "We are in a new conference so right now, it's kind of an anomaly in that sense," Martinez said. "We just have to go out there and figure out what the conference is bringing to the table. But, in terms of that, this is a team that is very much looking for growth this season."

St. Charles East

Coach: Jennie Kull

Last year's record: 17-17

Top returners: Lia Schneider, sr., L; Kate Goudreau, sr., OH; Sarah Musial, jr., S

Top newcomers: Kristin Erickson, sr., DS; Maddie Bach, jr., MH

Worth noting: Kull will be retiring at season's end after 36 years of coaching volleyball. The Saints won a regional title last year and return several key players in the rotation in Schneider and Goudreau.

St. Charles North

Coach: Lindsay Hawkins

Last year's record: 23-14

Top returners: Jessica Parker, sr., S; Katie Scherer, jr., L/DS

Top newcomers: Haley Burgdorf, fr., OH; Lauren Guajardo, jr., MH

Worth noting: The North Stars have two outstanding building blocks in Parker and Scherer. In her three varsity seasons, Parker already has reached 1,000 career assists. Scherer, a Maryland recruit, will be valuable in the back row with her length and passing ability. Burgdorf, a freshman, will be getting heavy playing time and is a name to keep an eye on.

St. Edward

Coach: Dawn Gross (3rd season)

Last year's record: 17-18, 3-3 (Metro Suburban)

Top returning players: Caitlyn Madsen, jr., OH/MH; Taryn Lemezis, jr., RS/S/DS; Jane Quanstrom, sr., OH

Top newcomers: Samantha Pogorzelski, fr., RS/S/OH; Alaina Nolan, fr., MH/OH; Dempsey Howicz, DS; Stephanie DeWitt, sr., S; Paige Anderson, sr., MH

Worth noting: Madsen had 21 aces, 14 Blocks, 40 assists and 24 digs in 24 games last year ... Lewis plays sand volleyball off-season which makes her indoor game that much stronger, according to Gross. She had 42 aces, 46 kills and 82 digs last year ... The coach said Quanstrom has the hardest serve and hit on the team ... St. Edward has 8 seniors to replace. "Overall this will be a rebuilding year," Gross said. "We have the athleticism, drive and ability to do well. Once we connect and get some games under our belt we will surprise a bunch of teams."

South Elgin

Coach: Joni Plach (17th season)

Last year's record: 35-5

Top returning players: Madeleine Shaner, sr., OH; Alicia Ochoa, sr., MH; Jaszmine Binion, jr., OH; Lily Slowinski, sr., RS

Worth noting: Alyssa Worden, a senior who won last year's Captain honors of the Daily Herald's Fox All-Area Team, tore her ACL and is out for the season ... Plach said Worden will still play college volleyball at Iowa and comes to practice every day to help her teammates. "She helps the team as much as she can. The younger girls really look up to her. She is always giving feedback to teammates during drills and is invested in the team to be successful even with out being able to play," Plach said ... Only four players return but they are experienced: Shaner, Ochoa, Binion and Slowinski are all third year varsity players....Plach is retiring this season after 17 years as the Storm's coach.

St. Francis

Coach: Lisa Ston

Last year's record: 24-14

Top returners: Addy Horner, so. S/RS; Jessica Schmidt, sr. MH; Anna Paquette, jr. OH/L; KK Dumpit, jr. S; Shay McMillen, jr. OH

Top newcomer: Katie Schuele, so. DS/S

Worth noting: The Spartans boast a solid returning corps from a powerful lineup that went three sets in 10 losses before losing to the 3A state runners-up. "We are excited about our experienced returning players and the leadership they bring," Ston said. "It will be fun to watch this group develop chemistry and learn to compete as one unit." Horner led the 2021 Spartans in kills (208) and aces (45) and was second in blocks (42) and assists (223) to Dumpit's 353. McMillen (186) and Everett (136) were 2-3 in kills and Schmidt was third with 41 blocks.