

Volleyball Tigers set their goals high for 2017 season

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
August 17 2017 5:57 AM





EDWARDSVILLE – Edwardsville's girls volleyball team reached the heights last season, getting to the IHSA Class 4A Chatham Glenwood Sectional final before the Tigers were eliminated by Normal Community.

With just two seniors – Shelby Saye and Nicki Meyer – having graduated from the team and with six seniors back this season, EHS is certainly aiming to going deeper into the postseason in 2017.

“We're excited to get going,” said Tiger coach Jami Parker. “We've got a returning group that's been on the floor for several years now, so there's a lot of experience – it should be exciting. We graduated two seniors, but we're returning everyone else and we've got some kids coming up and competing for those slots, so it's going to be an exciting year.”

Parker and the Tigers know, based on last season's finish, the bar has been raised for this season. “It has,” Parker said of the raising of the bar, “and one of the challenges the coaching staff has talked about is that we need to continue to up our bar to get to challenging the girls and finding new ways to teach the skills we want taught to them.

“We've got six seniors this year – they've got a lot of experience and they definitely have their goals set high for what they want to accomplish; they're working hard in the gym in preseason to make sure their fundamentals are strong and we're going to get there.”

Those six seniors – Rachel Pranger, Kate Martin, Megan Woll, Delaney Allen, Rachel Verdun and Mikaela Suess – are going to work together to get the Tigers to where they want to go, as well as the returning underclassmen, Parker feels. “We're so strong across the board,” Parker said. “We're returning Rachel and Maria (Smith) on the outside, Corinne (Timmerman) and Kate are returning in the middle, Rachel is returning setting, Megan Woll's been liberoing for the ball control for us for several years – it's such a well-rounded core and it takes all of them working together as a unit for them to really achieve.

“That's the nice thing about this group, they work so well together. They've been together for a long time; some of them have been starting for four years. They're great kids, both on and off the floor; they make good decisions outside of the gym and they work well with the younger kids, they take them under their wing and on the floor, they're working hard as well.”

As always, the Southwestern Conference schedule offers no breaks. “It's a good conference,” Parker said. “I've said this before, but volleyball is different from any other sport; you only play everyone one time, so you've got to be on your game every night

when you play – there's no easy matches in this league and especially in volleyball, when you've got only one shot at every team; one game can make or break your conference. It's important every night.”

The Tigers will be facing an difficult out-of-SWC schedule as well, with noted St. Louis powers like Cor Jesu and St. Joseph's on the schedule as well as tournaments in Effingham and the Chicago area. “We've got a very heavy non-conference schedule,” Parker said. “We play in tournaments in Effingham and two up in Chicago – a lot of state-ranked teams and nationally ranked teams; we play several teams over in St. Louis – we play a very difficult schedule outside of the (SWC).

“The girls have their work cut out for them this year and they're ready to step up to the challenge.”

EHS' season begins Labor Day weekend with the Tiger Classic tournament at Lucco-Jackson Gym before a Sept. 6 visit to St. Joseph's in St. Louis and the Effingham Crossroads Classic the weekend of Sept. 8-9. The league schedule begins Sept. 14 at home against Granite City.

