

Volleyball Scrimmage Tonight; Season Starts August 27

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The Trailblazers' volleyball season kicks off at home on 6 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 27, with a match against St. Louis Community College, but there is plenty of pre-season action including tonight's annual intra-squad "Blue and White" scrimmage at 6 p.m. in the George C. Terry River Bend Arena.



Other preseason scrimmages include a match against Principia at 5 p.m. on Friday, Aug. 23 at Lewis and Clark and at 9 a.m. on Sunday, Aug. 25 at Washington University against two Washington split squad teams as well as McKendree and Westminster Universities.

Head Coach Jim Hunstein said he is enthusiastic about this year's returning and new talent on the team as well as starting his second season as head coach.

"I have a much better idea now what it takes to succeed in the conference and region, and we have players here who can compete," said Hunstein.

Three returning sophomores are featured in the National Junior College Athletics Association (NJCAA) Division II Media Guide as top returning players in Region 24 at their positions.

Outside hitter Hannah Baker, of Granite City, is listed as the top attacker with an average of 2.48 kills per set from last year.

Ashleigh Holtgrave, of Highland, is the top returning setter with 8.38 assists per set.

Michaela Hlafka, of Bunker Hill, is top returning libero with 3.4 digs per set.

"I'm very proud of Hannah, Ashleigh, and Michaela," said Hunstein. "They worked very hard last year and earned these accolades. This lets the rest of team know that our program is improving and that we will be a factor in both the region and the conference."

Competing in Region 24 as well as the Mid-West Athletic Conference (MWAC) will be a challenge again this year. Three of the schools have been named in the top 20 among all NJCAA teams including No. 3 Parkland, No. 12 Lincoln Land and No. 16 Illinois Central. Parkland and Lincoln Land are also members of the MWAC with Lewis and Clark.

"I know those teams may be tough this year," said Hunstein. "But I know we'll be better than we were last year, so I'm not too worried."

Hunstein said the scrimmages against university-level players in the next few days will help his team prepare.

Washington is a perennial national championship contender and starts the season ranked No. 7 in National College Athletic Association (NCAA) Division III.

"These are not JV teams, but top players in every program. I can't wait to see how well we can do in these scrimmages," said Hunstein.

"This will also let our players who want to keep playing after Lewis and Clark see what the game is like at the next level."

In addition to Baker, Holtgrave, and Hlafka, other returning sophomores include right-side hitter Alyssa Wagner, of Edwardsville, middle hitter Lizzie Meierotto, of Brighton, and defensive specialists Shelby Long, of Chester, and Brandy Twichell, of Godfrey.

Joining the team as freshmen middle hitters are Ashlyn Hlafka, of Bunker Hill, Kate Gorman, of Jerseyville, and Cammi Davis, of Collinsville.

Freshman outside hitters include Megan Ramsey, of Fenton, Mo., and Trevyn Landes, of Alton.

Right-side hitter Tarah Wallace, of Shipman, setter Heather Spa, of Bethalto, and defensive specialist Alayna Ducahrme, of Brighton, round out roster.

“This is an outstanding group of young ladies,” said Hunstein. “They are working hard to learn our system and are picking things up quickly. Plus, many of them can play more than one position, which gives us a lot of flexibility.”

For more information call (618) 468-6250 or visit <http://www.lc.edu/athletics/womens/volleyball>

To view the NJCAA Division II volleyball media guide visit <http://www.njcaa.org/>