

Early exit last season is keeping volleyball team on mark

Kelsey Glover
Reporter

After finishing last season 17-16 overall and 11-7 in Southern Conference play, the most wins by any Elon team since joining the league, the volleyball team looks to raise the bar of excellence even higher this season.

"Each season is completely different... You never know what is going to happen," Head Coach Mary Tendler said. "All I know is that we are going to be mentally prepared for each team and we will go all out on every play."

The team is eager to prove itself in the regular and the post seasons. After an early exit in the first round of the SoCon Championships at the hands of Chattanooga last year, the same team that broke Elon's seven match winning streak, there is a definite will to go further and showcase the team's ability.

The team's first match is scheduled for today at the North Carolina Central Tournament, which is followed next weekend by the Elon Volleyball Classic, where the Lady Phoenix play host to teams in and out of the conference.

"If a student comes to one of our early matches, I guarantee they will want to keep coming back," Tendler said. "We will put a very energetic, exciting team on the court."

Senior Jessica Barrow said she is especially "looking forward to playing

Chattanooga because we want revenge from losing close matches last year." She said she would also like to beat Furman.

"Throughout my three years (almost four) at Elon, Furman is the only team in the conference that we have not been able to defeat while I've been here," Barrow said.

The team has added three energetic players, Caroline Lemke, Megan McMahon and Traci Stewart, to compensate for the loss of three strong seniors, Emily Lucci, Britany Westphal and Natalie Moore. Each of the seniors had outstanding careers, but the incoming freshman look to round out the team nicely.

"Personally, I am just looking forward to every match," Lemke said. "I'm so excited just to compete every moment and represent Elon out there and to compete at this high level at each opportunity. I feel so comfortable and confident with the team we have for this season."

In addition to fresh faces, the team has many strong returning players with the experience needed to step up and guide the team to a strong showing. With four seniors rising to leadership, Elon volleyball has the opportunity to further develop and strengthen its program.

"I've always been more the type of person who shows leadership by their performance on the court," Barrow said. "This year, I'd like to step it up a little and become more of a vocal



Team members came to campus early to begin practicing for the fall season. Their first tournament is today and tomorrow at the North Carolina Central Tournament in Durham, N.C.

FILE PHOTO

leader."

Barrow is coming off shoulder surgery in the off-season and is hoping she can still be the dominant player The Nest has seen for the last three years.

Also returning are three

sophomores and two juniors who had impressive seasons last year.

"We just need to work hard at each and every practice, play the best we can against the best teams in our conference, and push

ourselves to be number one," sophomore Lauren Copenhagen said. "The team this year is very strong and determined to be the best, and we will do anything we need to do to win."



Volleyball Schedule

8/29 - 8/30	Tournament		Durham, N.C.
9/5 - 9/6	Tournament	2 p.m.	Elon, N.C.
9/12 - 9/13	Tournament		Moon Township, Pa.
9/16	Winston-Salem State	7 p.m.	Elon, N.C.
9/19 - 19/20	Tournament		Williamsburg, Va.
9/24	High Point	7 p.m.	Elon, N.C.
9/27	Appalachian State	4 p.m.	Boone, N.C.
9/28	Western Carolina	2 p.m.	Cullowhee, N.C.
10/4	Furman	7 p.m.	Elon, N.C.
10/5	Wofford	2 p.m.	Elon, N.C.
10/8	UNC Greensboro	7 p.m.	Elon, N.C.
10/12	The Citadel	1 p.m.	Elon, N.C.
10/13	C. of Charleston	5 p.m.	Elon, N.C.
10/18	Davidson	2 p.m.	Davidson, N.C.
10/19	Georgia Southern	2 p.m.	Statesboro, Ga.
10/25	Samford	8 p.m.	Birmingham, Ala.
10/26	Chattanooga	4 p.m.	Chattanooga, Tenn.
10/31	Appalachian State	7 p.m.	Elon, N.C.
11/1	Western Carolina	3 p.m.	Elon, N.C.
11/5	UNC Greensboro	7 p.m.	Greensboro, N.C.
11/8	Wofford	TBA	Spartansburg, S.C.
11/9	Furman	2 p.m.	Greenville, S.C.

For the complete schedule check elonphoenix.com

Leaders gone but talent remains with Elon volleyball

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In sports, as seasons change, so do coaches and rosters. While some teams suffer the loss of key players, that does not look to be the case for Elon's volleyball team.

Despite a first-round tournament loss, the Phoenix enjoyed a successful season last year. But when they take the court for their 2008 season opener, there will be a dramatic difference. Three of the six starters will be absent.

The team graduated three important seniors, but refuse to let that hold them down this season. Instead, the squad has quickly filled out the lineup with three energetic freshman eager to compete.

"We have a good mix of experienced players and youth this season," Head Coach Mary Tendler said. "Many of our returners either started or saw significant time on the court last season."

"[The former seniors] were... big impact players for our team last year, but losing them just gives other players the opportunity to fill those shoes and bring the same competitive intensity," senior Jessica Barrow said.

One of the graduated seniors and leading overall players from last year, Emily Lucci, definitely left her mark on Elon's volleyball program. In her last game against Chattanooga, she led the team in kills with a total of 14. This impressive performance only finished out an indelible season.

Throughout the season Lucci accumulated 312 kills, 308 digs and led the team in blocking with 131. Her abilities even garnered her several NCAA match records throughout her career at Elon.

"Britany [Westphal], Emily [Lucci] and Natalie [Moore] all had outstanding careers here at Elon," Tendler said. "I appreciate everything that group has done for the program. Our three freshmen do not have to replace them. They only bring their own personalities and strengths to the team."

Although all three players will be missed, the future looks bright for the Phoenix. Throughout the preseason, the team has been reworking their rhythm and making plans for another successful season while incorporating their new players.

"All three have come from winning volleyball programs," Tendler said. "They came into preseason very confident and ready to play. I like the fact that each one brings something totally different to the team. As they learn our system and get to know the returnees, their level of play will get higher and higher."

Freshman Caroline Lemke said that she already loves the Elon community and the team she is joining.

"Everyone works so hard, and the chemistry is great both on and off the court," she said. "I definitely feel like there is always a need to step up in any athletic situation. Coming in after losing such strong seniors adds a little bit of pressure, but all I can do is work hard to do my best so that I can perform to help the team."