

Sports

Volleyball team clinches playoff slot

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Sports Editor

On a day when the past was looked upon with affection in honor of Elon volleyball's departing seniors, the team was quick to reverse a troubling part of that recent past.

With a Saturday afternoon Southern Conference 3-0 win against Chattanooga, the Phoenix flushed out any lingering memories of defeat at the hands of the Lady Mocs and captured the fourth and final playoff berth to the SoCon Tournament, pitting the team against College of Charleston.

Earlier this season, Chattanooga swept Elon 3-0 in a crucial SoCon match-up. Last season, the Lady Mocs ruined the 2007 Senior Day with a 3-2 win, only a week before they knocked the fighting Phoenix out of the SoCon Tournament in the first round.

"[Defeating Chattanooga] felt really good because we have had a few firsts this year," head coach Mary Tendler said. "We felt we could always beat them but we never did. I was proud of the girls

for finally accomplishing that."

On Friday, Elon was swept by newcomer Samford University, a team that has quickly made a name for itself in SoCon volleyball.

The Bulldogs clinched the top-seed in the North Division last week and improved their record to 27-3 and a sizzling 16-1 mark in conference action.

With the weekend split, Elon (18-15, 7-10) finished fourth place in the North Division of the SoCon standings and will face top-seeded College of Charleston from the South Division on Friday, Nov. 21 at UNC Greensboro.

"It is great to be the underdog," freshman Caroline Lemke said. "We have nothing to lose and everything to gain. With our fight and ability, I think we can come up and surprise a lot of people."

The Cougars defeated Elon 3-0 in the regular season and have topped the SoCon Tournament for five consecutive years.

College of Charleston owns a 24-6 overall and 17-1 conference record, with their only loss coming at the hands

of UNC Greensboro.

"[College of Charleston] this year is a new team with a lot of freshmen on the court," senior Kelley Blakewood said. "The pressure is all on them and we are excited to go after them. Coming off an [Elon] win like this, I think they are going to be a little nervous."

Blakewood, who has only played for Elon for two years after transferring from NC State, made an immediate impact for the Phoenix.

She broke NCAA records in digs and service aces and now holds the school record for digs in a season with 535.

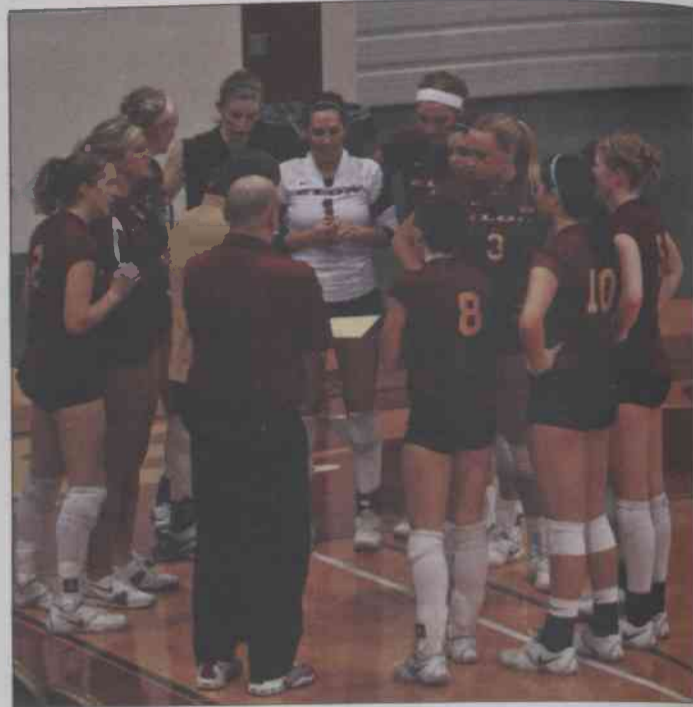
Blakewood also holds the school record for digs in a match and is among the top-5 for most digs in her career with 1,016.

"[Senior Day] meant a lot to me," Blakewood said. "It was great to recap my career and get a feeling of all the things me and my fellow seniors accomplished during our tenure."

Lemke and fellow freshman Traci Stewart led the Phoenix offense and defense this season.

Lemke posted a team leading 333 kills and 98 blocks. Stewart recorded the next highest totals with 314 kills and 91 blocks.

Lizzie West posted a team



ANDREW DODD | Photographer

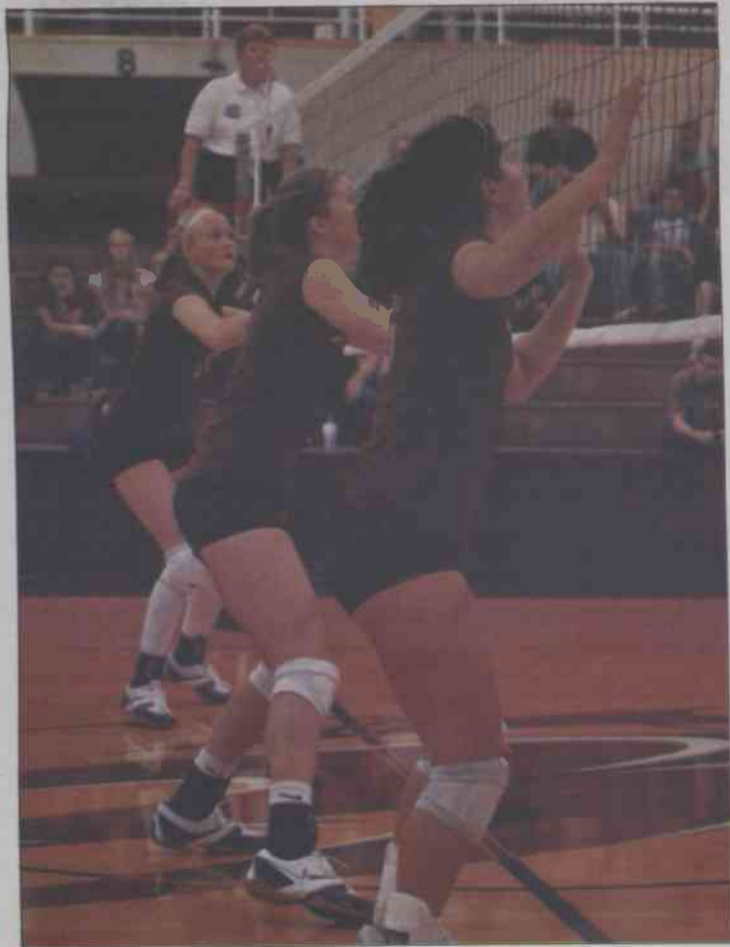
Head coach Mary Tendler prepares the Elon Phoenix volleyball team for a competitive Southern Conference clash with the Chattanooga Mocs.

high 43 service aces while Blakewood recorded 494 digs.

Elon is paced for its best overall season finish in years, including the past six seasons with Tendler at the helm of the program.

"Our goal at the beginning was to make it to the semi-

finals of the tournament," Tendler said. "We have never done that since playing in the SoCon. We still have that available to us. We have been mentally preparing for that and now, we are getting physically ready for [College of Charleston]."



ANDREW DODD | Photographer

Mandy Wilson, Sarah Schermerhorn and Megan McMahon get ready to block the incoming Chattanooga kill. Elon tallied nine team blocks.



ANDREW DODD | Photographer

Freshman setter Megan McMahon sets up the kill for fellow freshman hitter Caroline Lemke. McMahon, recovering from a recent thumb injury, tallied 26 assists while Lemke recorded six kills.

Seniors sound-off: What is your most memorable Elon volleyball moment?



Stefanie Meyers

"In a game last year, [Blakewood's] shoe came off in the middle of a rally and she was trying to get it out of her way so she could keep playing. In an effort to do so, she threw her shoe off to the side without looking and it missed hitting Coach Tendler's head by inches. Classic."



Kelley Blakewood

"Last year, we beat Appalachian State in five games and they were, at the time, the No. 1 team in the conference. It was last year's seniors' first time ever beating Appalachian State, so it was a big deal."



Shelley MacBean

"It was when I received a yellow card during a match. I'm usually not known for my aggressive attitude, but during this match I really got animated. I will never forget that moment of receiving that card."