

Maryland Eastern Shore-2007 Volleyball

The 2007 season will feature a new coach, some new players and a whole new attitude for the Lady Hawks Volleyball team.

Gone is former coach Alex Temkin, who returned home to his family and in, is Don Metil, former Head Coach at Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference rival Coppin State. Metil enters the year a perfect 500 in five years of coaching and with a record he hopes to get back on the plus side.

Gone are senior twins Kim and Stephanie Braxton and senior Melanie Durimel. Stephanie was a two time team MVP from her libero position. Her leadership will be missed. Also gone are standouts Yael Rozner and Maja Baltic. The international pair left to pursue a major not offered at UMES. In are four talented newcomers with something to prove at the Division I level.

Gone are the 2006 preseason predictions of ninth, as UMES exceeded those predictions and put together a third place campaign and a 19-15 mark overall.

Gone are the "young" players talked about the last two seasons and in are four juniors and a senior ready to make an impact in the MEAC.

THE PLAYERS

Led by All-MEAC performer Holiday Eller (110 G, 375 kills, 3.41 kills per game and 252 digs) the outside hitter is ready to put her two years experience in the maroon and grey to good use and lead the Hawks back to the top of the MEAC standings. She stands at 6-0 and has a powerful swing that sends opponents away from the net.

Also returning is Caylin Woodward. Now a sophomore, the 6-0 outside hitter had a solid first year, tallying 124 games, 377 kills, 42 service aces and 368 digs. The Garden Grove California native has gotten a year of Division I volleyball under her belt now and looks to light up the stat sheet in the upcoming campaign.

Two other returnees look to add depth to the outside hitter position but will also fight over the vacated libero spot that Stephanie Braxton left. Chanita Wesley stands at 5-9 and played in 119 games and amassed 196 digs (1.65/game) last season but played the outside hitter position the previous year. In that year Leah Amundson also started at outside hitter, playing in just four matches (13 games) and tallied 36 kills. Two separate injuries kept the 5-10 big hitter sidelined for the rest of 2005 and all of 2006 but she will return this year to make a significant contribution to the Lady Hawks.

The middle will be filled up this season by 6-0 Adora Luster, the only returning middle blocker on the roster. She tallied 124 games and racked up 179 kills, 34 aces and 69 total blocks. Have no fear however as two talented players will also see the middle for UMES. San Chukwura sat out last season but is expected to play a major role for the Hawks. Touted as the best leaper on the team by Coach Temkin, Chukwura stands at just 5-9 but has an amazing vertical which allows her to play well over the net.

Brand new to the squad will be Whitney Johnson a 6-2 sophomore from Prince Frederick, Md. She is a transfer from the University of Albany. There she played in 25 games as a true freshman last season and totaled 22 kills and 12 blocks in nine matches.

The most recent addition to the Hawks is another middle blocker who can play the outside, Shaylin Sommer. Standing at 6-2 Sommer has west coast experience and brings with her a winning attitude and the ability to play several positions on the court in addition to numerous accolades.

Rounding out the squad is the setter position. Lone senior Kate Smith saw limited action behind Yale Rozner last season but knows how to play everyday, putting up stellar numbers as a freshman working with former Hawks standout Jana Milin. Smith posted numbers in 37 games, tallying 38 assists and 23 digs. A serving specialist she entered many matches a substitute for a crucial service.

Her competition will be Christina Estebane' a 5-6 setter, who was a 2005 National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) All-American at Midland College. The rising junior had 23 double-doubles and four triple-doubles during her first year at Midland and had 839 assists, 336 digs and 303 kills as a sophomore. That year she also picked up four triple-doubles and 15 double-doubles.

THE SCHEDULE

The schedule offers some high quality non-conference competition and some familiar MEAC foes. UMES opens at home against Metil's former team Coppin State University on August 24th and then hits the road, not returning to the William P. Hytche Athletic Center until September 25th, again against Coppin State in a MEAC match-up.

In between dates with the Eagles, UMES will play in tournaments at Manhattan College Lafayette College (Pa.), and Sacred Heart University where they will play the likes of Seton Hall, Arkansas-Little Rock, Farleigh Dickinson, George Washington, Providence and St. Peter's. They also travel to Bucknell for a non-conference match on September 19th.

The Hawks open MEAC play on September 14th at Morgan State and follow with a date two days later at Hampton.

The Hawks host their own tournament at the end of September when they play Delaware State, St. Francis (Pa.), Robert Morris and Norfolk State. The Comfort Inn Classic runs from Friday September 28th through the 29th.

UMES plays Howard, Morgan State and Hampton all at home later in the season and travels to Delaware State, Coppin State and Howard for their remaining MEAC matches. They host North Carolina Central, a school reclassifying to Division I status for senior night on November 11th.

The MEAC Championships are again held at Hampton University November 16th-17th.

"It should be a good schedule for us," said Metil. "We have some tough opponents and plenty of conference competition that will help us prepare for the championships."