

Crites takes over Lady Oiler team ready to make another run at title

By MIKE COURSON
Just two volleyball teams in all of Kansas completed perfect seasons last year. Central Plains was one of them. But some changes are on the way. Former coach Kim Rolfs is out after posting an 83-3 record over the past two seasons. Former assistant Lisa Crites steps into the head coaching job with plenty of returning firepower on her roster.

Missing in action will be Lady Oiler staples Taylor Rolfs and Reagan Phelan, both of whom will be playing college basketball later this year. Crites will have back three returning seniors and two juniors who were each key to last year's state championship run.

"We graduated two amazing players in Taylor and Reagan," she said. "Led by an outstanding senior trio, the team is determined to put forth the energy and effort to meet some high expectations again this season."

An undefeated season

usually means lots of accolades. Senior Cassidy Crites returns as a middle back and setter after earning various honors last year, including Kansas Volleyball Association (KVA) Class 2A All-State honors. She made the all-state tournament team and finished last season with 539 assists and 145 kills.

Senior Kylee Kasselmann returns as an outside hitter after earning state tournament team honors. She was a Class 2A second-team selection. She finished last year with 274 kills. Senior Chelsea Bieberle returns on the right side and as a setter. Bieberle, Crites, and Kasselmann were all first-team all-academic selections.

Coach Crites will also have a pair of talented juniors in the mix. Libero Taylor Oeser is a key component of the Lady Oiler defense, finishing with 300 digs last season. With Rolfs gone as the team's leading hitter, Cassidy Pflughoeft will step up after finishing with 22 blocks and 34

block assists last year. Both Oeser and Pflughoeft were All-CPL honorable mentions last year.

Coach Crites has been around the game plenty, and is looking forward to another exciting fall with the girls.

"There is something so special, but yet also hard to describe, about the feel of the gym in the fall," Crites said. "These athletes are good players, good students, and most importantly good people, so it is easy to want to work with them and to be a part of their team."



2016 Lady Oiler Volleyball: Front row, from left: Darian Hubbard, Rebecca Stratmann, Addison Crites, Rylee Cunningham, Cassidy Pflughoeft, Julie Donecker, Avery Hurley, and Rachel Lamatsch. Back row: Zoe Potter, Delaney Rugan, Chelsey Bieberle, Cassidy Crites, Kylee Kasselmann, Taylor Oeser, Kylie Lamatsch, and Destiny Hurley.

(photo by Mike Courson)

State champs return to lead Lady Oiler tennis team

By MIKE COURSON
The 2015-16 year proved to be a banner one for Gary Bittner and his Oiler tennis teams. Last fall, then-juniors Keeley Hipp and Janae Ryan lost just one match all season, winning the Class 3-2-1A state doubles title to give Bittner his first state championship. Last spring, the Oiler boys followed with a team title.

Hipp and Ryan return as seniors and favorites to repeat as state champions. They will be the leaders on a relatively small team.

"Once again our numbers are down, but we have a very good nucleus to build upon," said Bittner.

Bittner will be down a couple of quality players as Kaylyn Oberle and Kylee Girard graduated in May. Oberle finished 11th at state last fall and finished her senior season with a 25-14 record. Girard went 15-11 last year.

After posting a 35-1 record last fall, Hipp and Ryan should be considered the 3-2-1A favorites as long as Collegiate stays in Class 4A. The girls had to play two Hesston teams in the state semifinals and finals. Three of those four players graduated in May. Conway Springs will return its senior duo of Kalie Jones and Sam Koch that finished third at



2016 Lady Oiler Tennis: From left: Emily Ryan, Keeley Hipp, Kirstin Gunder, Janae Ryan, Hannah Beran, and Mikayla Menges. Not pictured: Hayley Chamberlain.

(photo by Mike Courson)

state.

Juniors Hannah Beran and Mikayla Menges saw time at No. 2 doubles last year and both return in 2016. Senior Kirstin Gunder and junior Hayley Chamberlain also return from last year's squad, and freshman Emily Ryan is expected to make an immediate impact in one of the varsity singles spots.

"I think this will be a fun group of girls to work with," Bittner said. "They are fun to be around and have

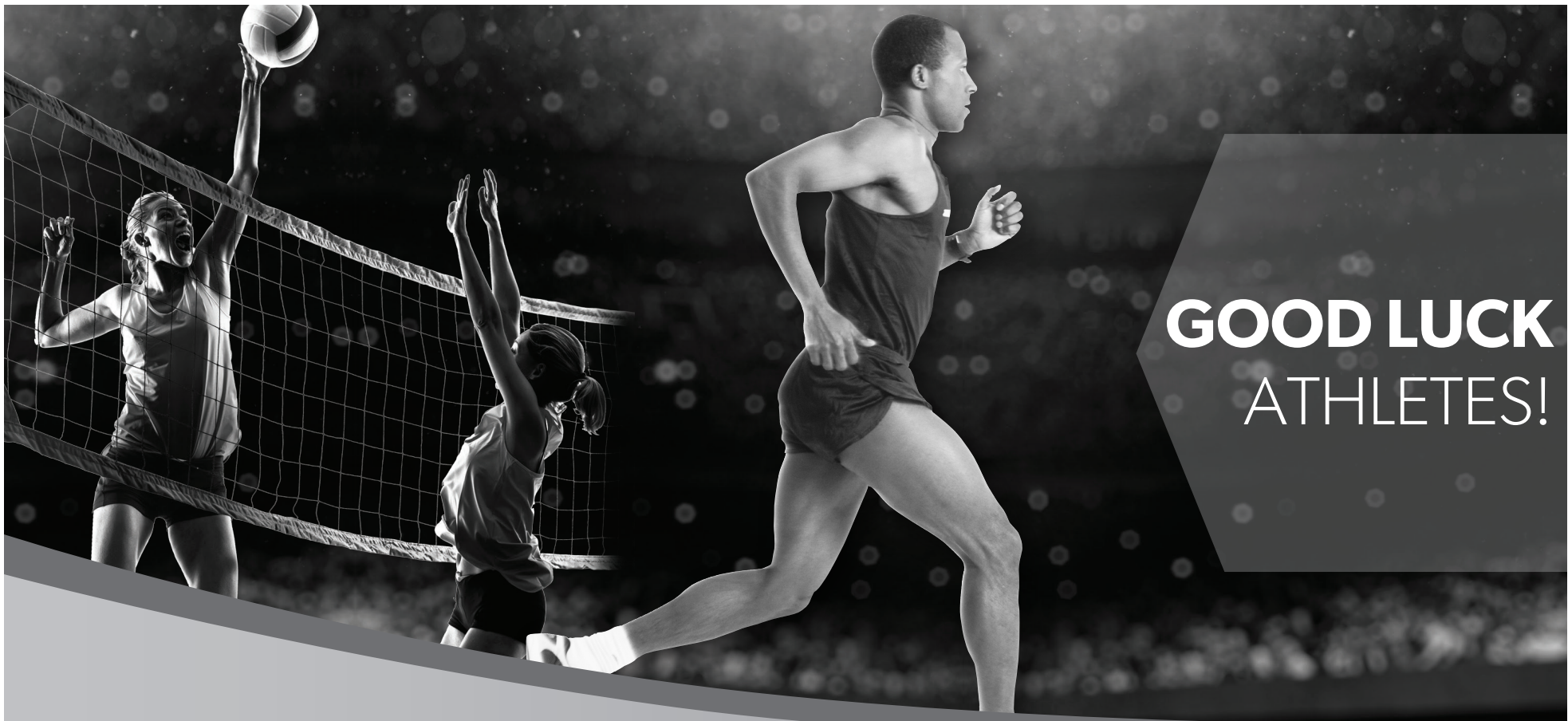
a very good work ethic. Family and friends do a fantastic job of supporting our program.

Bittner's goal remains the same, and that is to be playing the best tennis possible late in the season.

"There are many outstanding players and coaches in our area," he said. "We have tremendous respect for them. We must prove we can compete locally and at the state level."

Central Plains volleyball 2016

Sept. 1	HOME QUAD
Sept. 10	@Ellsworth Tourn.
Sept. 17	@Russell Tourn.
Sept. 20	@Otis-Bison Tri.
Sept. 24	@Hoisington Trn.
Sept. 27	HOME TRI.
Oct. 4	@Ellinwood Tri.
Oct. 6	HOME TRI.
Oct. 11	@Ness City Tri.
Oct. 15	CPL@Kinsley
Oct. 18	@Ness City Quad
Oct. 24	Sub-state
Oct. 30-31	State



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