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GO TIGERS!

Lady Tigers Emphasize Positive Team Mentality On And Off Court

Kelsey Buchholz
Sports Writer



“We have a group of hard-working girls with tremendous attitudes. Our team will be one of a kind, and one you wish you had the opportunity to play on,” said Kim Braaten, first-year head coach of the Rothsay Tiger volleyball program.

Coach Braaten is excited about this upcoming season to say the least. The potential is there. The energy is there. The drive is there. Now to put all the pieces together.

After coming off a 9-15-1 season, the Lady Tigers are showing their coach what they are made of and Braaten was quick to point out their “strong work-ethic and a competitive edge.”

These girls are not missing a beat despite losing four key seniors from last year’s squad. Already poised to step into those positions are this current year’s seniors, also four of them: Reygan Balken, defensive specialist; Rachel Brenden, middle hitter; Emily Christ, middle hitter; and Cora Honer, rightside hitter.

Those four seniors along with juniors Jayna Gronewold, previously a rightside hitter, and all-conference honorable mention Jenna Fabre, setter, return to the Lady Tiger lineup. Gronewold will be playing as the libero this season.

“Being able to play Jayna in many positions is every coach’s dream,” Braaten said. “She has already been working her way around the court, making great



Members of the Rothsay Tiger Volleyball team are left to right, back row - Coach Halle Schumann, Coach John Reber, Emily Christ, Cora Honer, Coach Kim Braaten, Coach Kellie Barry; middle row - Grace Lider, Summer Wigdahl, Jayna Gronewold, Rachel Brenden, Kenadi Carlsrud; front row - Reygan Balken, Madison Tillman, Jenna Fabre and Chase Balken.

passes along the way.”

Christ, Balken, Gronewold, and Fabre will serve as this year’s captains.

These six girls have stood out on the court early this season, showing leadership, poise, and a strong skill set for the younger

netters.

“I see all my seniors as team leaders, along with Jayna and Jenna,” noted Braaten. “They bring spirit and consistency for our team.”

This year’s team is the perfect blend of youth and experience. The six returners are joined on the court by sophomore outside hitter Grace Lider, freshman setter Chase Balken, and outside hitter Summer Wigdahl. The team also includes two incoming eighth-graders.

Outside hitters Kenadi Carlsrud and Madison Tillman have stepped up and proven time and time again that they are ready for the varsity level.

Each athlete has her own set of skills to work on, role to fulfill, and goals to work toward but team goals are in place, too. Braaten has stressed a few different specifics:

- to improve player skills each day. Fundamentals are key and they are being stressed each and every day. Once the fundamentals are mastered, the extras are that much easier to accomplish.
- 2 to become leaders on

and off the court. Braaten knows that in a smaller district like Rothsay, these volleyball players are looked up to by everyone including the youngest kindergartners. Doing what is right, not only skill-wise on the court, but conscious-wise off the court is key.

• to find success in everything. From having a stellar night serving to solid coverage to an aggressive offense, the Lady Tigers attack each practice and game with a positive attitude, which leads itself toward positive results.

That can-do attitude also has affected their optimism on the season. Braaten believes that any team is beatable. The Lady Tigers were 4-6 in the conference last year, but played much better the later the season went, evening the score with many conference foes. This year, Rothsay would like to start strong and keep that momentum moving forward.

Assisting Braaten in her inaugural season are Kellie Barry, Halle Schumann, and John Reber.

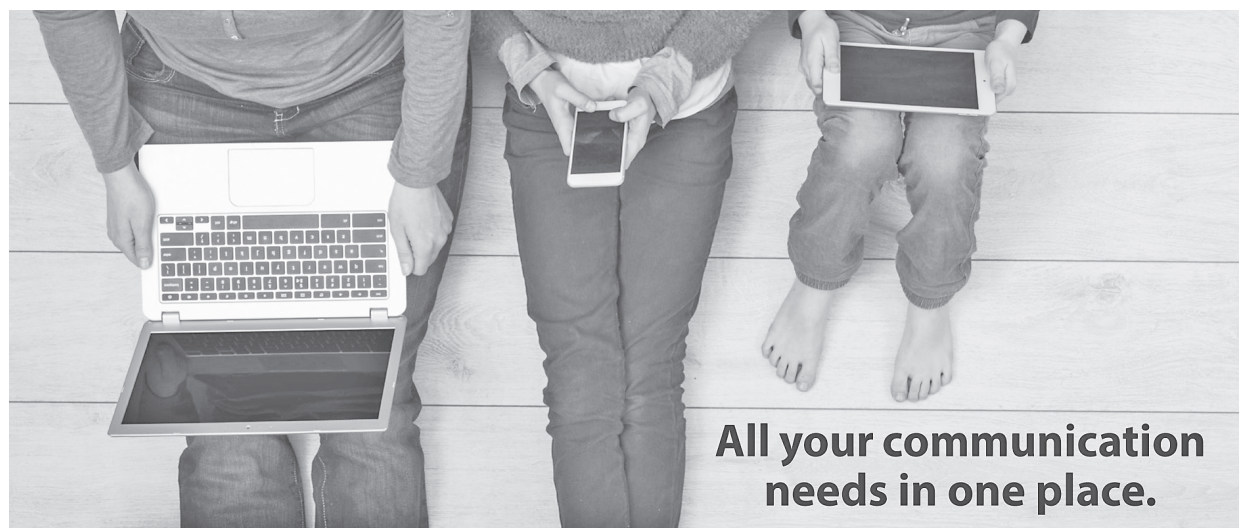
The Lady Tigers open their season at Ulen-Hitterdal then host an always tough Underwood team before going back on the road for the next three games. But venue doesn’t play into the Rothsay netters’ mindset as they are attacking this season

where they can win any game, anywhere, in any situation. And with that strong, positive attitude, anything is possible.



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