

# Ellinwood volleyball looking to get over sub-state hump in 2018

By MIKE COURSON

In each of the last two seasons, the Lady Eagle volleyball team has come up a single win shy of the state tournament. Coach Shelly Duvall has moved on to coach in Great Bend, but new head coach Greg Maxwell is taking over a squad with hopes to get over that hump in 2018.

With just one senior on last year's squad that won a title in the tough Central Prairie and finished the year at 24-14, things had lined up well heading into the offseason. Two varsity players have since moved and another is not playing, leaving Maxwell with just three returning starters.

Ricker was a key piece in recent seasons. Last year she earned an all-league honorable mention after finishing second in the team with 162 kills. She was also among the team leaders in aces, digs, and blocks.

Maxwell still has back some of the top players in the CPL. Senior Maddy Ward put down 337 kills in 2017 – the



2018 Ellinwood Lady Eagle volleyball team

fourth-best season in school history. Ward also sits at No. 2 on the school's all-time stuff list. She finished second on the squad with 41 aces a year ago and led the team with 60 blocks and 295 digs.

Sophomore Mya Maxwell made an immediate splash in her first varsity season last year. Her 64 aces were the third-most ever in a single season at EHS, and her 500 assists were fourth-best in a

single season. Maxwell also finished third on the team with 110 kills in 2017.

Senior Kaitlyn Pohlman did a little of everything as a junior to earn an all-league honorable mention. Her 91

kills were fifth on the team, her 40 aces were third on the team, and she was second on the team in digs (274) and serve receive (298).

With just three starters back and some new players in the wings, Coach Maxwell said developing that youth will be a key to success this year.

"We will start two freshmen, two sophomores and two seniors," he said. "We have a lot of volleyball experience with all of our girls, but it will be important that we as coaches foster a strong environment of growth and improvement with each experience."

With so much youth, Maxwell is excited to see his players progress individually and as a team over the course of the season.

"The most exciting thing as a coach is to hopefully see the growth this team can make throughout the season to reach their potential and be playing their strongest volleyball in October when it matters most," he said.

# Ellinwood football team ready to tackle move back to 11-man

By MIKE COURSON

It was a big deal with the Ellinwood football team moved to the 8-man format for the 2014 season. The Eagles were coming off back-to-back winless seasons in the 11-man ranks in 2012

and 2013, and playing smaller competition paid off with a 6-3 season in 2015.

Still, when the switch was made everyone knew the move back to 11-man was inevitable. The

facilities stayed the same for good measure. Now the time has come. For the first time since 2014, the Eagles will play 11-man football.

"We have had a great offseason in the weight room getting stronger and learning how to compete," said second-year head coach Alex Birney. "I expect our team to compete at all times and give 100 percent.

"Moving from 8-man to 11-man will be a tough switch, but we aren't using that as an excuse or a reason to not compete in every game we play. I want our guys to learn to love the game and competition."

Birney's five returning starters and 12 returning varsity athletes would have been big news in the 8-man game. Even with 11-players

on the field, it's a nice start. The biggest loss to graduation is the state-medalist sprinter Drew Blake, who finished with 1,008 rushing yards season last year and led the area with 21 touchdown runs.

Senior Kody Koetter (5-10, 190) converted to running back last year and was off to a strong start before going down with an injury. An all-league honorable mention last year, he will be the main threat out of the back field in 2018.

"Kody will be a hard runner and will always leave his heart on the field," Birney said. "He is an animal in the weight room and we look forward to see it translate on the field. Had he not torn his ACL last year early he would have been tough. He squatted 450 pounds and benched 265 pounds, with good speed."

Up front, Koetter will

need senior Bryce Baker (6-3, 210) to create some space. Baker was a second-team all selection on the offensive line last year.

"Bryce will lead the group of unexperienced offensive linemen," said Birney. "He has had a great offseason and has a lot of potential on the line. His knowledge and experience will be key to help our younger guys. Woodson Corbett and Dylan White also had great off seasons and are going to have a big role this year."

With Blake and Koetter in the backfield, the Eagles were a run-first team in 2017. Senior Landon Robl (6-1, 170) does return at wideout as a potential threat. He will be joined by Ryan Niles, Brandon Carr, David Hammeke, and Lane Klepper.

"We have a lot of new guys here with some great athletic ability," Birney said. "Landon will lead the group, but we will have a lot of other guys who will contribute a lot. Ryan is a returner who will be a tough matchup in the slot. We also added Brandon, David, and Lane to this group. They will compete every play of the game. This group will be tough for any team we play to matchup against. They have size strength speed and good knowledge of the game."

Defense was a weakness for the squad in 2017. After a 30-0 win against Kinsley to open the season, the Eagles gave up at least 30 points

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## Ellinwood volleyball 2018

Aug. 28	@Wichita Tri.
Aug. 30	HOME TRI
Sept. 4	@Otis Tri.
Sept. 6	@Larned Tri.
Sept. 8	@Ellsworth Tourn.
Sept. 10	@Great Bend Tri.
Sept. 18	@Macksville Tri.
Sept. 20	@Larned Quad
Sept. 22	@Lyons Tourn.
Sept. 25	HOME TRI (Sr. Night)
Oct. 2	@Central Plains Tri.
Oct. 8	@Otis Tri.
Oct. 13	CPL@Kinsley
Oct. 20	Sub-state
Oct. 26-27	State

## Ellinwood football 2018

Aug. 31	LACROSSE
Sept. 7	@Sublette
Sept. 14	@Ellis
Sept. 21	@Lakin
Sept. 28	LYONS
Oct. 5	STERLING (HC)
Oct. 12	@SW Heights
Oct. 19	CIMARRON
Oct. 25	Playoffs TBA

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