

Young Tigers led by new coach and one senior will work to keep strong volleyball tradition

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – Edwardsville High School’s girls volleyball team will have a new look to it in 2018.



Not only did the Tigers lose six seniors from last year's team that reached the Class 4A super-sectional at Normal West, falling to Minooka 26-15, 25,15, the Tigers have a new coach after Jami Parker stepped down over the summer to take the job at Triad.

Lisa Orlet, who once coached at Belleville Althoff and played at Incarnate Word in St. Louis and at Kansas, is taking over the program at Edwardsville; she acknowledges that taking over a program that has been one of the top programs in the St. Louis area the past 16 years under Parker will be a challenge.

"Jami built a great program here; her record (more than 400 wins in her 16 years as the Tiger coach) speaks for itself and just seeing the girls in the gym, you can see the tradition is still strong," Orlet said. "Hard work and high expectations – I'm looking forward to it."

Orlet will have to replace six seniors from last year's team, including Kate Martin, Rachel Pranger, Rachel Verdun, Delaney Allen, Mikaela Suess and Megan Woll; only Corrine Timmerman returns to the team this year as a senior. "Those six girls played a great leadership role and brought the team to a new level," Orlet said. "There's some girls here that are working hard to step into those leadership roles and chomping at the bit to get their opportunity to play – it'll be fun. We'll be young, but it'll be fun."

The transition from Parker to Orlet isn't necessarily an easy one, but Orlet is doing all she can to make the transition easy; Orlet isn't changing much from Parker's system. "It's definitely doing a lot of rebuilding," Orlet said. "We're trying to make the transition (from Parker to Orlet) as easy as possible; we're not changing a lot, just going and trying to refill those positions and keep the same tradition that Jami built."

"Jami and I have worked together in the past; we are pretty similar on the higher standards of character and discipline in the gym – that's evident. These girls are all such great young women – they put their academics first and they work really hard. They're playing for each other and they're building a lot of camaraderie – that's the biggest thing."

"When you lose six (seniors), you have to rebuild the team chemistry and that sort of thing."

The schedule this year will also have a bit of a different look this year with Granite City's departure from the Southwestern Conference. "There's a lot of strong teams in the (SWC) this year," Orlet said, "some senior-laden teams we'll have to compete with; we're really looking forward to it."

Despite the youth of the team, Orlet thinks this year's Tiger volleyballers will be a good team to watch. "The Edwardsville Tigers won't disappoint," Orlet said. "They're going to stay true to their traditions."

The schedule gets under way at 10 a.m. Saturday with the intersquad Orange and Black game at Lucco-Jackson Gym, with the 16-team Tiger Classic tournament opening the season Labor Day weekend; other tournaments on the schedule include the Nike Classic in Effingham Sept. 7-8, the Mizuno Classic in St. Charles, Ill., Oct. 5-6 and a tournament at Lyons Township in LaGrange Oct. 19-20 right before the IHSA Class 4A postseason begins.

The Tigers will visit Parker and Triad Sept. 10, then meet Orlet's high school alma mater Incarnate Word two days later; the SWC opener comes Sept. 20 at home against East St. Louis. EHS will also clash with traditional area powers like Villa Duschene, Cor Jesu and Breese Mater Dei this season. The Class 4A postseason gets under way in late October, with the state tournaments being held Nov. 9-10 at Illinois State's Redbird Arena in Normal.

