

Hamilton Works To Inspire Alton High School Girls Volleyball Squad To Success

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON - Phil Hamilton has had a lot of success as a volleyball coach over the years at the elementary and middle school levels and high school club teams. On September 26, 2023, Phil Hamilton was appointed head volleyball coach for the Alton High School Redbirds girls' volleyball team. After one practice, he led the Lady Redbirds into an away conference game against powerhouse O'Fallon High School.



"I'm really happy to get a chance to coach this team," he said. "With limited time left to play in the season, I have my work cut out for me to meet the other coaches and the players. Fortunately, my team is very well-drilled, and they have been running their system since the summer contact days.

"The support I have gotten from the athletic department has been top-notch. Athletic Director Chris Kusnerick is a busy man with 8 sports going in the fall. He is available day or night to answer questions. His phone and email must never stop."

Hamilton continued and said: “My assistant coaches have been awesome. Alyssa Maher coached softball for 10 years at Lewis and Clark Community College and has a deep athletic background. She graduated from AHS in 2008, and played volleyball under Dan Carter. She knows the system well, and has made my job much easier as I get used to the team and what they are running. Chelsea Anderson was a track star and is the head girls' track coach at the high school. It's great to have an athlete of her caliber assisting me. Emily Jackson graduated from AHS in 2010. She played volleyball for Dan Carter and Stacey Ferguson. She also played at McKendree University. Having a player-coach to work with me is invaluable.”

The senior players are Grace Carter, outside hitter and team captain; Ella Artis, setter; Tayen Orr, right side; Aleigha Snipes, outside hitter; Karen Lewis, middle blocker; and Lane Miller, a defensive specialist. The junior players are Anaiah Clanton-El, outside hitter; Myra Trammel, defensive specialist; Kristina Castelli, libero; Mallory Hosford, outside hitter, and Berlynn Clayton, setter. “There is a lot of talent in this group, and they really love to play,” Hamilton said. “Many of them wish to play in college.”

“As the interim coach, I aim for a smooth transition and to give these players a great finish to their season,” he said. “I hope to be back as a coach next fall. I have lots of ideas to improve the volleyball program at the high school and in the school district. My vision is a 5- to 10-year program, and to see improvement in volleyball across the whole community.

“This is my 12th year to coach volleyball. I've trained a lot of players, ranging from 3rd to 12th grades. Most of my experience is with elementary and middle school players. I have had some club teams at the high school level that were basically all-stars that I recruited to be on it. We've had a lot of high school players involved in a summer volleyball league. They assist with younger players and also have their own group sessions.

“I did not play this game, but I have been able to take what I know from basketball and baseball, and apply it to volleyball. There are some surprising similarities. The mechanics of over-hand serving are similar to throwing a ball. Setting is similar to shooting a basketball. The volleyball pass, though, is unique to the game. I've had to watch many players to understand volleyball mechanics well enough to train them. In any event, you're never done learning.

“I have run a summer volleyball league since 2017 which is now in its seventh season. Last year, we had 154 players that came from a wide-ranging area: all the way from Calhoun High School to St. Elizabeth School in Granite City. Many of the players are in the Alton school system. A lot of players attend local parochial schools, like St. Mary's, St. Ambrose and Marquette. The league was open to boys and girls in fourth through

12th grades. The purpose of the league is to keep them playing in the off-season, while they cross-train in their other sports. Experience has shown that participation in the summer league has greatly advanced the progress of the players. It's almost like they've played an extra volleyball season, particularly for the younger players."

Alton High came away with a victory recently against McCluer North. The team has some tough opponents to play and moving closer to the postseason.

"We aim to be a competitive team that will not be taken lightly by any of our opponents," Hamilton said.