

MOUNT UNION VOLLEYBALL

Mount Union moves up to Class AA; loses top killer

By **NICK WAGNER**

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MOUNT UNION – The finish that Mount Union's volleyball squad had last season was not something coach Tessa McCormick wanted or expected.

The Trojans cruised through Inter-County Conference play with a 17-3 mark during the regular season. But once district play started, Mount Union dealt with a key injury and was unable to get out of the first round.

"We did have a good season last year," McCormick said. "It was kind of a sad ending because I felt we could have went farther."

That was in the single-A classification. This season, the Trojans will be moved up a classification and will be without the only Trojan volleyball player to record 1,000 kills in a career: Taylor Miles.

The Trojans will, however, have four returning starters taking the reins. Miles is gone, along with a defensive force in Makayla Powell.

"Taylor was obviously a major part of our offense," McCormick said. "So we'll really have to step up on our offense this season."

Mount Union returns some height with Kristin Miles and Chapin Guilante. But the Trojans will miss the defense of Powell, who was a three-year letter winner. Defensively and passing, Powell was a great asset for the Trojan squad.

McCormick is actually in an uncharted territory this season with Mount Union. It is the first time in a while that she is blessed with a deep squad. She usually

AT A GLANCE

MOUNT UNION TROJANS

District 6, Class AA

Coach: Tessa McCormick
2011: 17-4

knows her first six and then there isn't much.

But this season is different.

Mount Union has four players ready to go, but the next two will be a fight between five or six girls, McCormick said.

"This year was definitely a different year for me," she said. "I usually have the girls that will get the job done. But this year we have a lot of girls that are neck and neck. We have a lot of depth that we had in year's past."

One thing for certain is senior setter Ashlyn Drake. Drake, a three-year letter winner, is the only returning letter winner for Mount Union. In the offseason, Drake has worked hard to improve her quickness.

"She knows the court and has always been a leader as far as telling everyone where to be," McCormick said. "I think her quickness has improved and this year will be her best year ever."

If Mount Union can find a good fit with the two open spots that it has, the Trojans will be able to make another push for an ICC crown – something that McCormick thinks is not out of the realm of possibilities.

The competitive factor at practice with five or six girls fighting for two spots could lead to some good play out of Mount Union.

"Everybody is working hard," McCormick said. "As of right now I hope all of the girls, five or six of them, get some experience. But we have four returning letter



Sentinel photo by NICK WAGNER

Members of the Mount Union volleyball team are, from left, front, Monica Steel, Liza Feagley, Kirkley Lear, Marissa Dimoff, Brittany Knable and Aly Kyler; back, Ashlyn Drake, Chapin Guilante, Abigail Grove, Kristin Miles, Brittany Brumbaugh and Brya Crawley.

winners. Those two spots will be what we need to fill."

Crossing into Class AA obviously will not have an effect until district play starts. But the Inter-County Conference will still be a tough one to crack for the Trojans.

West Branch, Juniata Valley and Bellwood-Antis all come back with strong teams, McCormick said. But the goal for Mount Union is to win the ICC once again and make it at least to the second round of states.

"We always have some tough games," McCormick said. "West Branch is always difficult and Juniata Valley always gives us a run. Also, since we moved to double-A, that will be a new experience for us. We play some teams that we have rivalry in other sports. I just hope we

don't get intimidated by other schools."

Mount Union opens play on Sept. 5 with a home match against Southern Fulton.

"We set team goals at the beginning of the season," she said. "We want to try and win the league. I don't think that it out of the question."

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