

Georgia Southern University

Digital Commons@Georgia Southern

Athletics News

Athletics

8-22-2018

Season Preview: Volleyball Strives for Consistency in 2018

Georgia Southern University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/athletics-news-online>



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Georgia Southern University, "Season Preview: Volleyball Strives for Consistency in 2018" (2018). *Athletics News*. 526.

<https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/athletics-news-online/526>

This article is brought to you for free and open access by the Athletics at Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. It has been accepted for inclusion in Athletics News by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@georgiasouthern.edu.

Georgia Southern University



Season Preview: Volleyball Strives for Consistency in 2018

Eagles open the season at the WVU Invite Friday.

Marc Gignac

Women's Volleyball

Posted: 8/22/2018 3:40:00 PM

STATESBORO – The Georgia Southern volleyball program will open the 2018 campaign Friday at the West Virginia Invitational. The Eagles meet the host Mountaineers and Wright State Friday and take on UConn Saturday.

GS returns four starters, including Preseason All-Sun Belt selection [Lauren Reichard](#), and 12 letterwinners to the 2018 squad. GS welcomes nine newcomers to the program, and six are pushing for playing time in the rotation.

Only the top eight teams in the Sun Belt advance to the conference championship in Atlanta in November, and consistency will be the biggest key for the Eagles to reach that goal and take the next step as a program.

"The great thing about the Sun Belt is that anybody can beat anybody so you have to be ready to play night in and night out," said Georgia Southern coach [Dustin Wood](#). "It's the teams that are more consistent that are the ones on top and that's what we're becoming. We have to be consistent every day with what we do and how we play."

Wood and the coaching staff approached the preseason with the mindset that all spots in the rotation were up for grabs, and the Eagles have had two-plus weeks of practice and a home exhibition match to put their best foot forward. Below is a look at how things have shaken out heading into the regular-season opener.

Setters

Freshmen [Madison Brown](#) and [Delaney DeCinces](#) have made their mark on the setter position, and Brown got the start and tallied 47 assists and 18 digs in the exhibition match against Anderson. Each brings a unique skill set to the position, allowing the coaching staff some options, and they are pushing each other to be better.

"Madison is more athletic and more technical," said Wood. "She runs a good offense but is in a learning curve of trying to be more creative and getting the decision making down. Delaney makes really good decisions and is pretty creative with the offense. She understands the game because she has been around volleyball from a young age and has been around people in her club and in her family who understand the game."

Senior [April Luther](#) played in 28 matches last season and averaged 7.65 assists and 1.81 digs a set, but injuries have hampered her in the summer and preseason.

"April is coming off an injury, and we're waiting to see when she can get back," said Wood. "We're anxious to get her healthy, and we'll see where she is and where we are as a team when she gets back."

Freshman Nico Meyer has pushed her classmates and is still picking up on the nuances of the system.

"Nico is a great teammate who comes to compete every day and really helps the gym," said Wood. "She is still learning the offense and not quite there yet, but it will come."

Outside Hitters

Freshmen Camila Gómez and [McKenna Tucek](#) have shined and shown the ability to be six-rotation outside hitters, which Wood covets in his system. Gómez missed the exhibition match with an injury but has international experience competing for the U20 and U23 Chile National Team. Tucek logged 14 kills, eight digs and three blocks against Anderson.

"McKenna is doing a great job passing right now, and we're confident that the offense will come," said Wood. "Cammie does everything really, really well as far as offensively, defensively in the back row and her passing. It's nice to have outside hitters who can play all the way around."

[Carly Turner](#) has shown her versatility with the ability to play either outside hitter or oppo. She filled in for Gómez in the exhibition match and finished with 12 kills.

"Carly can play the outside in the front row and she has done a really good job of terminating the ball," said Wood. "Her main job is to block and score, and then we can put a back row player in for her so we have a lot of options."

Senior [Julia Landavazo](#) is in the mix for time in the rotation as well, and junior [Kendall Adams](#) will use a medical redshirt this season.

"Julia has had a lot of good practices recently, and she is in the conversation for playing time so it's nice to have competition for the position, and they are raising the level of their play," said Wood. "Kendall is injured and will sit out this season and be ready to go next season."

Middles

The Eagles returned both starting middles from last season in Reichard, a senior and four-year starter, and sophomore [Skylar Ball](#), who played in all 29 matches of her rookie campaign. Reichard led the Sun Belt with a .342 hitting percentage and ranked second in blocks with 1.15 a set, and Ball averaged 1.68 kills and 0.91 blocks a set while hitting .316.

"Lauren has been tremendous in leading and helping develop the younger players," said Wood. "Skylar had a very good freshman season, and we're looking for her to continue to improve and take the next step."

Sophomore [Lauren Hager](#) has made an impact so far, and Wood calls her development the biggest surprise of the preseason. She received the starting nod against Anderson and is battling to be in the rotation.

"Something clicked in Lauren this spring and summer, and she has come in ready to go," said Wood. "Lauren and Skylar are competing for that M2 job. It's been a really good battle and very competitive, and they are making each other better."

Freshmen [Christina Walton](#) and [Maddi Ruble](#) have shown flashes – enough to give Wood another option in special situations that call for blockers.

"Christina and [Maddi Ruble](#) are learning the nuances of what it takes to be a middle in college," said Wood. "There are a lot of bright spots, but we're working on consistency with those two, and their future is bright. They are very good blockers, which we will get to use in some special situations in matches. They will be able to help our team greatly in that role."

Opposites

The Eagles have three oppos who all bring something different to the table, and all three will see playing time, depending on the needs of the team.

[Maddie Bryant](#) saw a bulk of the time in the exhibition match and collected seven kills, three blocks and a dig.

"[Maddie Bryant](#) has been a really nice surprise as a freshman - attacking the ball well, blocking well and just doing her job," said Wood.

[Lexie Dorminy](#), a sophomore transfer from Clemson, will push for playing time, and Turner gives the Eagles a third option.

"Lexie is becoming very consistent with her approach, and we've been working on blocking this week," said Wood. "It's a new team, new system and getting used to new setters so she's getting there, but it's going to take some time. Each day, we see steps forward."

Defensive Specialists

GS is deep in the back row with senior [Joscelin Morrow](#) returning as the libero and a host of options to insert into the rotation. Morrow averaged 3.33 digs a set in 29 matches and notched 26 digs against Anderson.

"Jos is doing a really good job of being a leader," said Wood. "She comes in ready every day and competes hard, and she's teaching the younger ones how to do that, which will help our program develop."

Junior [Brooke Birch](#) chipped in seven digs and three aces in the exhibition and averaged 1.83 digs per set in 25 matches last season.

"Brooke has been a very good right back for us with consistent passing and defense," said Wood. "She's made great strides in her maturity on the court, and that's really coming out right now."

Sophomore [Katelynn Riner](#) has played her way into a place in the rotation with her work in the preseason. She played in all five sets against Anderson, posting 10 digs and three assists.

"Katelynn has done a heck of a job for us," said Wood. "She's played right back and middle back and will start the season in the rotation."

Sophomore [Landon Jones](#) demonstrated her versatility last year, averaging 1.80 digs and 3.13 assists in 25 matches and showing the ability to set as well as a serve that delivered 19 aces.

"Landon is pretty versatile, and she played a lot for us last year," said Wood. "She's coming on in practice and starting to put up better passing numbers."

Junior [Ryan Tuten](#) gives the Eagles another serving option and a different look out of the back row.

"Ryan is in the right back mix for oppo, and the upside with her is that she brings on offensive attack from the back row," said Wood. "It's going to be a position by committee with all these guys. The good thing is that they are pushing each other, and we have a lot of options depending on what our needs are."

The Eagles play two straight tournaments on the road before opening the home slate against North Florida Sept. 4 at 6:30 p.m. In order to generate added interest in the Georgia Southern volleyball program among its Savannah patrons, that contest has been moved to Alumni Arena on the Georgia Southern Armstrong Campus, and admission is free. It's the first intercollegiate sporting event on the Georgia Southern Armstrong Campus in Savannah since the consolidation.

The Eagles' first matches in Hanner come Friday, Sept. 14, when GS hosts its annual tournament, the GATA Challenge.

Season tickets for the Eagles' 12 home matches in Hanner Fieldhouse are \$40, and single-match tickets are \$5-8 and \$3-5 for youth ages 4-12. Group tickets for groups of 15 or more are available for \$3 each and must be purchased prior to game day.

Copyright ©2018 Georgia Southern University