

2009 Outlook

The 2009 Northwest volleyball team will not have to worry about experience this season. For the first time in two years the Bearcats will return multiple upperclassmen to the team. There are no seniors on this year's squad but the Bearcats will be led by four returning juniors in Sara Falcone, Iesha Haskins, Amber Ryan and Paige Spangenberg.

"Experience is our number one strength this season," said Head Coach Anna Tool. "We have a strong core of upperclassmen and players that can really be leaders. Even though we don't have any seniors we have girls that have spent two years in the program already and are used to our offense and tempo."

Northwest's quick-strike approach will be another strength, and coach Tool is excited about the possibilities.

"We have hitters and players who can force the action and who can have that aggressive demeanor on the court at all times," said Tool. "As long as we stay consistent, play our game and worry about what our game plan is we will be tough to stop."



Paige Spangenberg led the MIAA with 5.45 digs per game and was second in the conference with 654 digs.

OUTSIDE HITTERS

Returning	Kills	K/G	Pct.
Alex Hanna	292	2.54	.141
Iesha Haskins	10	1.43	.429
Total	302	3.97	.285
Lost	209	2.05	.164

Newcomers: Brit Bahr, Minka Foster, Kelsey Larson, Ashley Mitchell

To be successful in its style Northwest will rely heavily on consistent ball control.

"Ball control is crucial to everything we want to do," said Tool. "If we can't be consistent, we'll run into some tough spots."

The Bearcats return All-MIAA honorable mention performers in Falcone, Ryan and Spangenberg. Ryan led the team in kills with 331, in total blocks with 102 and in service aces with 18. Falcone was first on the team in hitting percentage at .262, second behind Ryan with 80 blocks and third with 253 kills. Spangenberg led the conference with 5.45 digs per set, and recorded a total of 654 digs.

"I look for those three to be the core of the team again this season," said Tool. "Amber and Sara will be an important presence in the middle, and are even stronger and quicker than last season. Paige will be the heart and soul of our ball handling and defense and I look for her to pick up right where she left off last season."

MIDDLE HITTERS

Returning	Kills	K/G	Pct.
Amber Ryan	271	2.17	.126
Sara Falcone	391	3.13	.285
Total	662	5.30	.205
Lost	86	1.02	.147

Newcomers: Amy Majors

Also returning this season are sophomores Alex Hanna and Andrea Potter. Hanna was second on the team with 292 kills, while Potter was second on the squad last year with 317 assists. Haskins started 22 games last year and finished with 174 kills and 39 blocks.

New players Bearcat fans can look forward to making an impact this season include Laura Akin, a six foot setter/outside hitter who transferred in from Marquette University.

"Laura will give us a lot of versatility both offensively and defensively," said Tool. "She has a big block and is a great athlete who will be able to do a lot for us both setting and hitting."

Junior Monica Roof, who transferred from Illinois Central College, will see playing time at setter and redshirt sophomore and outside hitter Ashley Mitchell will add firepower to the Bearcat lineup.

"Monica has such quick hands that we can play her in back if we decide to move Laura up front to hit," said Tool. "Ashley could be a force in this league. She's a tremendous athlete and puts up aggressive blocks and attacks."

Outside hitter is where the Bearcats have the greatest depth this season. Along with Hanna, Haskins and Mitchell, redshirt freshmen Brit Bahr and Minka Foster, and true freshman Kelsey Larson will get a chance to shine for Northwest. Every position across the board should have solid depth for the Bearcats and the ability to bring in key people off the bench and make adjustments if need be.

"(Freshman) Amy Majors, has performed well in early practices but has chosen to redshirt this season," said Tool. "Alicia Watson from Shawnee Mission Northwest High School has looked strong as a defensive specialist."

Aiding Spangenberg in the back row will be junior Amber Guthrie and freshman Wendy Whelan.

"We had a few newcomers who came in January and trained with us all off-season and it really helped us gel as a group," said Tool. "They made a great commitment to practice and training time, so when the fall came they weren't new and you can see the difference early on."

Once again the MIAA is stacked with top-25 teams and quality squads. Defending champion Emporia State starts the season at No. 3. Others ranked in the preseason top-25 include 2008 national semifinalist Truman (No. 9), Washburn (No. 11), Central Missouri (No. 12) and Pittsburgh State (No. 17).

Northwest will be at tournaments two of the first three weekends of the season, which will provide the Bearcats with strong non-conference tests and will be important for regional play and seeding later on in the year.

SETTERS

Returning	Assists	A/G
Andrea Potter	317	5.47
Total	317	5.47
Lost	883	9.20

Newcomers: Laira Akin, Monica Roof, Alicia Watson

"In conference play our focus has to be one game at a time," said Tool. "Our non-conference slate will be critical for us because we need to establish ourselves and gain some confidence and momentum prior to MIAA play," said Tool.

Two keys for the Bearcats this season will be communication and raising expectations. Northwest will need a high-level of communication if they want to succeed in all facets of the game. Communication will have its hand in everything the Bearcats try to do this season. The Bearcats will also look to raise the expectations of the entire program this year.

"We need to expect to win everytime we step out onto the floor, there shouldn't be any excuses for not feeling that way," said Tool.

DEFENSIVE SPECIALISTS

Returning	Digs	D/G
Paige Spangenberg	654	5.45
Total	654	5.45
Lost	125	1.92

Newcomers: Amber Guthrie, Wendy Whelan

Northwest looks to have a ton of potential this season and has the opportunity to make an impact in the MIAA and in the region.

"If we put it all together and don't have too many injuries, I don't think it's a stretch to say we could finish in the top tier of the conference and qualify for regionals," said Tool.

Either way the season should provide a lot of excitement for the Bearcats and their fans.



Alex Hanna (left) and Andrea Potter will play key roles this season for the Bearcats.

THE SCHEDULE

The Bearcats open the season at the Christian Brothers Tournament in Memphis, Tenn., starting with Ouachita Baptist and Illinois-Springfield on Aug. 28, and finishing with Christian Brothers and Missouri-St. Louis on the 29th.

Northwest will then host the Comfort INNvitational where they will play Newman and MSU-Moorhead on Sept. 4, and will then take on Texas A&M Commerce and Quincy on Sept. 5.

A trip to Wisconsin for the Wisconsin-Parkside Tournament in Kenosha on Sept. 11-12 is next on the schedule for the Bearcats. Northwest will play Quincy, St. Joseph's, Wisconsin-Parkside and Indianapolis.

The Bearcats open their MIAA schedule on Sept. 16 as they host Washburn. Northwest will travel to Fort Hays State for its first road conference match-up of the season on Sept. 18. Northwest will travel the next day to defending champion and preseason favorite Emporia State to take on the Hornets in MIAA play.

The Bearcats will have to wait until Oct. 16 before traveling to face national semifinalist Truman. The Bulldogs will also be the Bearcats' final home match of the season on Nov. 13.

The Bearcats will attend the Washburn Invitational this year on Oct. 2-3. The Bearcats will play Tarleton State, Southwestern and Southeastern Oklahoma State, and West Texas A&M. Other notable matches in the season are Oct. 14 vs. Missouri Western, Oct. 24 vs. Emporia State, Oct. 30 at Pitt State, Nov. 6 vs. Central Missouri and Nov. 11 at Missouri Western.

November 20th is when the NCAA South Central Regional will begin.

Numeric Roster

No.	Name	Pos	Ht.	Yr.	Hometown / Previous School
1	Andrea Potter	L/DS	5-7	So.	Omaha, Neb. / Mercy HS
2	Monica Roof	S	5-9	Jr.	Groveland, Ill. / Illinois Central College
3	Laira Akin	S/OH	6-0	So.	Blue Springs, Mo. / Marquette University
4	Minka Foster	OH	5-9	Fr.	Suffolk, Va. / Nansemond-Suffolk Academy
5	Alex Hanna	MH/OH	6-0	So.	Red Oak, Iowa / Red Oak HS
6	Amy Majors	MH	6-0	Fr.	St. Joseph, Mo. / Central HS
7	Amber Guthrie	DS/OH	5-8	Jr.	Platte City, Mo. / Highland C.C.
8	Amber Ryan	MH	6-0	Jr.	Esko, Minn. / Esko HS
10	Ashley Mitchell	OH/MH	5-10	So.	Davenport, Iowa / Central HS
12	Brit Bahr	OH	6-0	Fr.	Lenexa, Kan. / Shawnee Mission West HS
13	Paige Spangenberg	L/DS	5-8	Jr.	Red Oak, Iowa / Wichita (Kan.) State University
15	Alicia Watson	S/DS	5-4	Fr.	Shawnee Mission, Kan. / Shawnee Mission Northwest HS
16	Wendy Whelan	L/DS	5-8	Fr.	Quincy, Ill. / Payson Seymour HS
19	Kelsey Larson	OH	5-10	Fr.	Fargo, N.D. / North HS
22	Sara Falcone	MH	6-0	Jr.	Omaha, Neb. / Omaha Gross Catholic HS
23	Iesha Haskins	OH	5-8	Jr.	Indianapolis, Ind. / Speedway HS

Alphabetical Roster

No.	Name	Pos	Ht.	Yr.	Hometown / Previous School
3	Laira Akin	S/OH	6-0	So.	Blue Springs, Mo. / Marquette University
12	Brit Bahr	OH	6-0	Fr.	Lenexa, Kan. / Shawnee Mission West HS
22	Sara Falcone	MH	6-0	Jr.	Omaha, Neb. / Omaha Gross Catholic HS
4	Minka Foster	OH	5-9	Fr.	Suffolk, Va. / Nansemond-Suffolk Academy
7	Amber Guthrie	DS/OH	5-8	Jr.	Platte City, Mo. / Highland C.C.
5	Alex Hanna	MH/OH	6-0	So.	Red Oak, Iowa / Red Oak HS
23	Iesha Haskins	OH	5-8	Jr.	Indianapolis, Ind. / Speedway HS
19	Kelsey Larson	OH	5-10	Fr.	Fargo, N.D. / North HS
6	Amy Majors	MH	6-0	Fr.	St. Joseph, Mo. / Central HS
10	Ashley Mitchell	OH/MH	5-10	So.	Davenport, Iowa / Central HS
1	Andrea Potter	S/DS	5-7	So.	Omaha, Neb. / Mercy HS
2	Monica Roof	S	5-9	Jr.	Groveland, Ill. / Illinois Central College
8	Amber Ryan	MH	6-0	Jr.	Esko, Minn. / Esko HS
13	Paige Spangenberg	L/DS	5-8	Jr.	Red Oak, Iowa / Wichita (Kan.) State University
15	Alicia Watson	S/DS	5-4	Fr.	Shawnee Mission, Kan. / Shawnee Mission Northwest HS
16	Wendy Whelan	L/DS	5-8	Fr.	Quincy, Ill. / Payson Seymour HS

PRONUNCIATIONS

- 3. L-AIR-a Ak-in
- 12. Brit BAR
- 13. Paige Span-gen-berg
- 22. Sara fal-CONE-e
- 23. i-EE-sha Haskins



Roster Breakdowns

By Class

• Freshman (6)

Minka Foster
Amy Majors
Brit Bahr
Alicia Watson
Wendy Whelan
Kelsey Larson

• Sophomore (3)

Andrea Potter
Alex Hanna
Ashley Mitchell

• Junior (7)

Monica Roof
Laura Akin
Amber Guthrie
Amber Ryan
Paige Spangenberg
Sara Falcone
Ilesha Haskins

By State

• Indiana (1)

Ilesha Haskins

• Iowa (3)

Ashley Mitchell
Alex Hanna
Paige Spangenberg

• Illinois (2)

Monica Roof
Wendy Whelan

• Kansas (2)

Brit Bahr
Alicia Watson

• Minnesota (1)

Amber Ryan

• Missouri (3)

Laura Akin
Amy Majors
Amber Guthrie

• Nebraska (2)

Sara Falcone
Andrea Potter

• North Dakota (1)

Kelsey Larson

• Virginia (1)

Minka Foster

By Height

5-4 (1)

Alicia Watson

5-7 (1)

Andrea Potter

5-8 (4)

Amber Guthrie
Paige Spangenberg
Wendy Whelan
Ilesha Haskins

5-9 (2)

Minka Foster
Monica Roof

5-10 (2)

Ashley Mitchell
Kelsey Larson

6-0 (6)

Laura Akin Brit Bahr
Alex Hanna Sara Falcone
Amy Majors
Amber Ryan