



Wittenberg Volleyball 2001 Season in Review

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SETTING THE SCENE: The Wittenberg University volleyball team continued its march through the North Coast Athletic Conference in 2001, winning eight straight matches to capture a seventh straight NCAC regular season crown. The Tigers, without any seniors on the roster and starting three freshmen by season's end, then crushed all challengers in the NCAC Tournament for a fifth straight year and advanced to the NCAA Division III Tournament for a sixth consecutive season.

After a first-round bye, the Tigers, ranked No. 11 in the nation and seeded No. 2 in the Great Lakes Region, were defeated by Ohio Athletic Conference champion Ohio Northern 3-1. The loss left the Tigers with a 26-9 final overall record.

While Wittenberg was again stymied in the national tourney, the Tigers enjoyed a fine regular season and finished second in four different in-season tournaments — at Mount St. Joseph, at Elmhurst, in the Wittenberg Tournament and at Trinity (Texas). All nine Wittenberg losses came against nationally ranked teams — Ohio Northern, Trinity, Elmhurst (twice), Juniata, Wisconsin-Whitewater, Mount St. Joseph (twice) and Walsh University (NAIA).

STREAKS: The Tigers closed the 2001 season riding a 35-match regular season NCAC win streak, a figure that balloons to 50 straight when victories in the NCAC tournament are factored in. Wittenberg's last regular season NCAC loss was in October 1997 in five games at Case Western Reserve. The Tigers' last defeat in NCAC tournament play came in five games to Ohio Wesleyan in the 1996 championship match.

Wittenberg has claimed seven straight NCAC regular season crowns, including four in a row outright without suffering a defeat. The Tigers also won the conference title in 1993, making the run a phenomenal eight championships in the last nine years.

In NCAC tournament play, the Tigers have won 15 straight matches since losing in the 1996 title contest to Ohio Wesleyan. Wittenberg has won seven of the last nine NCAC tourney crowns, including the last five.

MAKING AN IMPACT: With no seniors on the roster and a strong nucleus of players returning from one of the best teams in school history, little was expected from the 2001 freshman class. Those opportunities came much earlier than expected, especially for setter **Sarah Yuskewich (Columbus, Ohio/Bishop Watterson)**, outside hitter **Monica McDonald (Newark, Ohio/Catholic)** and defensive specialist **Emilie Schmid (Canton, Ohio/Massillon Jackson)**.

McDonald opened the season in the start-

ing lineup and by quickly showed everyone exactly why she belonged there. She finished the season with a team-best and NCAC-leading 539 kills in 122 games, good for an average of 4.42. She also contributed 121 digs and 12 blocks.

Yuskewich worked her way into the starting lineup by midseason and provided a spark as the team went 9-1 with her as the primary setter in the final weeks of the regular season. Yuskewich finished with 1071 assists, second-most in the NCAC, in 124 games, good for an average of 8.63. She also chipped in with 120 digs, 158 kills, 21 service aces and 95 blocks, second-most on the team.

Schmid gained more and more playing time as the season went on, starting several of the most important matches late in the season. Playing almost exclusively in the back row, Schmid finished with 219 digs.

POSTSEASON HONORS: The postseason honors were many, as one might expect for a team that dominated its conference again and was ranked among the top 15 in the nation all season. Two players, in particular, claimed special recognition.

Senior middle hitter **Tiffany Keller (Massillon, Ohio/Tuslaw)** was named NCAC Player of the Year after leading the Tigers in blocks with 111 and ranking among the team leaders in several offensive categories, including kills with 264. Keller was also named all-region for the second straight year.

Monica McDonald was named NCAC Newcomer of the Year and Great Lakes Region Freshman of the Year, in addition to making first-team all-conference and all-region. Senior outside hitter **Teresa Murphy (Blacklick, Ohio/Newark Catholic)** made All-NCAC for a third straight year. **Sarah Yuskewich** was named Honorable Mention All-NCAC.

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS: The 2002 season should be another outstanding one for the Wittenberg Tigers, led by a senior class that boasts three former NCAC Players of the Year. Outside hitter **Brittany Baume (Springfield, Ohio/Southeastern)**, setter **Shelli Habegger (Curtice, Ohio/Oregon Clay)**, **Teresa Murphy** and **Tiffany Keller** make up perhaps the strongest class in school or conference history. Baume was the 1999 NCAC Player of the Year, Habegger won the same award in her record-setting 2000 season, and Keller claimed the honor following the 2001 campaign. Murphy has been all-conference all three years of her career and has been the most consistent player in the group.

They figure to be joined by almost the same cast of characters that ran the conference table in 2001, led by sophomore defensive specialists

Jen and Michelle Emming (Cincinnati, Ohio/Mt. Notre Dame), outside hitter **Lindsay Nelson (Massillon, Ohio/Tuslaw)** and the aforementioned group of freshmen.

The schedule will be as imposing as ever, with several of the top teams in the country making appearances on it (*see below*).

ALOTTA CLASS: Even as the Tigers were excelling on the court, they were putting together another outstanding performance in the classroom as well. As a team, Wittenberg volleyball finished the first semester of 2001-02 with a 3.47 cumulative grade point average. Seven players made the Dean's List and two of them recorded 4.0's.

THE COACH: **Connie Surowicz** ends her eighth year guiding the Tigers with a record of 219-86 at Wittenberg and a career mark of 249-120, including two seasons at Walsh University in North Canton, Ohio. With a 61-3 NCAC and the aforementioned 35-match regular season NCAC win streak carried forward another year, Surowicz has established the Tiger program as preeminent in the conference and an annual contender on a national level.

The Tigers have won five straight NCAC regular season and tournament championships and six in Surowicz's eight years at the helm. The team has also made six straight NCAA Division III tournament appearances.

Tentative 2002 Wittenberg Volleyball Schedule

Aug. 30-31	@ Mount St. Joseph Tourn.
Sept. 6-7	TBA
Sept. 13-14	@ Washington U. Tourn.
Sept. 19	@ DePaul
Sept. 21	ALLEGHENY/KENYON
Sept. 25	EARLHAM
Sept. 27-28	WITTENBERG INVITATIONAL (Calvin, Carnegie Mellon, Ohio Northern, Mt. Union, Hope, Case Western, Franklin, Wittenberg)
Oct. 5	@ Oberlin/Wooster
Oct. 9	@ Ohio Wesleyan
Oct. 11-12	WITTENBERG NATIONAL INVITATIONAL (Baldwin-Wallace, Thomas More, RIT, Nazareth, Wittenberg)
Oct. 19	@ Hiram/Denison
Oct 25-26	@ Wisconsin-Whitewater
Nov 1-2	WITTENBERG NATIONAL QUAD (Mount St. Joseph, Juniata, Washington U.)
Nov 5	NCAC Tournament
Nov 8-9	NCAC Semifinals/Finals
Nov 14-16	NCAA Div. III Tournament
Nov 23	NCAA Div. III Tournament
Dec 6-7	NCAA Div. III Tournament