

## University High School Volleyball Preview by Jeff McKinzie

After a successful 2013 season in which the Pioneers went 22-12 before losing in the regional final to Prairie Central High School (final record 22-13), the team will return only four players from last year's squad, with eight new players joining them.

To say the least, University High School will have a new look for the upcoming season. But that's a fact that won't make anyone on the team cringe, as both the players and head coach Karen Valouche are looking forward to surpassing last season's accomplishments.

Coach Valouche, speaking at a practice on August 28, said that this year's team comprises of two sophomores, seven juniors and three seniors, and that they "definitely bring with them a very hard work ethic", and praised sophomore Jamie Walling's ability to contribute right away. Speaking about Walling, Valouche said that "she has just stepped in, and you would never know that she's a sophomore on the court."

Valouche is also pleased about the overall performance of the other players on the team so far, saying, "we're re-doing a lot of things, but I think what this group brings with them is tons of energy to the game, and they have that killer instinct of not letting the ball hit the floor, so I think they're going to play pretty good defense and be very scrappy."

Senior Alexis Lee, who will be playing at University of Mississippi for the 2015 season, also spoke of the team possessing a strong defensive mindset. "We're going to be a really good defensive team and really scrappy, and I think we have a lot of fight within us. We're small, but we can play with the best of them."

Another senior, Patience Brown, has committed verbally to the University of Akron for 2015. "We'll be a competition to other teams," said brown of the upcoming season.

So where should the Pioneers finish at the end of this season? Coach Valouche isn't sure, but hopes to enjoy some post-season success.

"Well, of course you always want to go as far as you can go, so you know you want to beat what we did last year that would definitely be an understatement and then I love to see us get super-sectionals or farther than that so... Whatever we can do," she said.

University High opens its 2014 season on Tuesday, September 2 against Bloomington at 7:00pm. Good luck this season, Pioneers!