



The task of replacing four starters along with six letterwinners from a team which compiled a 24-7 overall record and advanced to the NCAA Division II Tournament in 2002 is not an easy one.

When the list of seven returning players includes no seniors and only two juniors, however, the task becomes even tougher.

While the odds facing the tradition-rich Ferris State University women's volleyball program in 2003 are difficult, eighth-year head coach **Tia Brandel-Wilhelm** remains optimistic following FSU's historic 30th anniversary campaign.

"We're young, but we have a great deal of energy and enthusiasm for the sport," she said. "The players returning are strong players in key positions.

"We'll be an exciting team to be a part of and to watch."

Besides advancing to the regional tournament for the first time in four years, the Bulldogs also finished second in the Great Lakes

Intercollegiate Athletic Conference's (GLIAC) North Division and registered their fifth-straight 20-win season in 2002.

Among the graduation casualties was second-team American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA) Division II All-America performer Alaina Olds and first-team All-GLIAC pick Stephanie Speed.

Despite the losses, Brandel-Wilhelm is confident the Bulldogs can contend again in one of the nation's most competitive leagues.

"Our goals are still to win the conference and reach the national tournament," Brandel-Wilhelm said. "In order to accomplish those goals, we're going to focus on improving each and every day."

Much of the squad's improvement will hinge on the leadership provided by a trio of captains including juniors **Ashley Green** and **Karla Fairbanks** along with sophomore **Brittney Godlewski**.

Karla Fairbanks

"Our tri-captains are strong competitors who will provide leadership both on and off-the-court," said Brandel-Wilhelm. "One of our strengths will be the fact the players are so close in age and such good friends."

Headlining the list of returnees is Green, who enters her third season as the squad's starting setter. She was both a first-team AVCA All-Great Lakes Region and All-GLIAC selection in 2002. The 2001 FSU Coaches Award recipient ranked second among the league's assists leaders (11.78 apg) and totaled 230 digs a year ago. She enters her junior campaign with 2,313 career assists and is 467 away from moving into fifth place on FSU's career assists leaders list. Her superb playmaking ability sets the tone for the Ferris attack.

"Ashley's skills are extremely strong," Brandel-Wilhelm said. "Her leadership and ability to control the flow of a match grew during the spring season."

On the outside, the Bulldogs return one of the GLIAC's top hitters in Fairbanks. A powerful attacker, Fairbanks started all 18 matches last season and appeared in 65 games. She registered 429 kills, 174 digs and 71 blocks while placing second on the team in kills per game (3.37 kpg). Fairbanks, who's the latest in a long line of premier hitters at Ferris State, will be asked to increase her productivity this campaign.

Godlewski provided an immediate contribution as a rookie at the libero spot, a designated back-row position implemented under a new collegiate rule last season. The 2002 FSU Bulldog Award winner and All-GLIAC Honorable Mention pick tallied 259 digs and added 21 assists in 67 games. Her significant experience at the position is a valuable commodity for Brandel-Wilhelm and enables the Bulldogs to experiment with a variety of lineups.

Although Ferris enters the 2003 campaign lacking significant game experience at the middle hitter position, enough talent is available to help solidify the spot. Sophomore **Becky Thurau** notched 88 kills and 46 blocks in limited action last year and will shoulder much of the load. The 6-4 Thurau is an effective player at the net and has the necessary size to create problems for the opposition.

Sophomore **Lauren Heine** figures to be a key contributor in the middle after totaling 22 kills, seven digs and four blocks in 14 matches last season.

The list of returning players also includes sophomores **Sarah Miller** and **Emily Clouse**. Miller, a 6-3 right-side hitter, chipped in 17 kills, seven digs and four blocks in six

appearances as a freshman while Clouse registered 90 assists in a reserve role. Both players provide needed depth and are likely to see an increase in playing time this campaign.

In addition to the seven returning players, Brandel-Wilhelm inked five prep recruits in the off-season. The group includes three outside and two middle hitters, all of whom are expected to challenge immediately.

Danielle Baucher, a 5-10 outside hitter, was a two-time (2002-03) All-Southwest Michigan Athletic Conference selection at Mattawan High School and attained third-team 2002-03 Michigan Interscholastic Volleyball Coaches Association (MIVCA) Class A All-State accolades. She has the tools to be productive as evidenced by her 511 kills, 460 digs, 93 service aces and 74 blocks in 128 games as a senior.

Outside hitter **Jamie Palazzolo** garnered team Most Valuable Player Award honors three consecutive seasons (2001-03) at Yale High School and twice (2002-03) earned MIVCA Class B Third Team All-State accolades. She totaled 521 digs, 275 kills and 58 blocks in 61 matches played while leading the Bulldogs to a 57-4-1 overall mark, a Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) Class B regional semifinal finish and the school's fourth consecutive league championship during the 2002-03 campaign. The 5-7 Palazzolo's intensity and spirit adds fuel to Ferris' youthful surge.

In 5-10 outside hitter **Keagan Krauss**, the Bulldogs added a player who was recognized as an all-region, all-county and All-Capital Circuit League honoree three times (2001-03). Krauss, who led Lakewood High School to a 64-6-2 overall record and a state semifinal-round appearance as a junior, provides considerable size on the outside.

Two freshmen, **Karla White** and **Molly Pickvet**, are expected to battle for playing time inside. The 6-0 White earned 2002-03 *Detroit News* Second-Team All-Metro accolades and set eight blocking records at Anchor Bay High School. A team captain, White was both a three-time (2001-03) Macomb Area Conference All-Academic Team selection and an all-county pick.

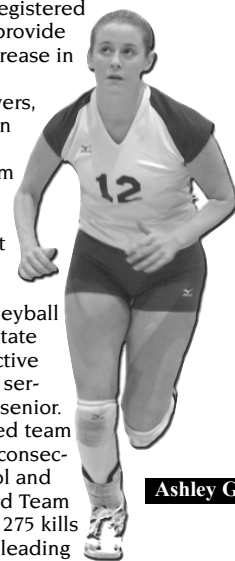
Pickvet received second-team MIVCA Class B All-State kudos as a senior after notching first-team all-state laurels in 2001-02. Her older sister, Kate, served as a Ferris student assistant coach during the 2002 campaign after compiling 772 kills and 193 total blocks in 95 matches for FSU from 1999-2001. Her familiarity with the program will be an added bonus.

The Bulldogs' youthful exuberance will face an extremely difficult schedule, which includes a season-opening trip to Florida and only eight home matches.

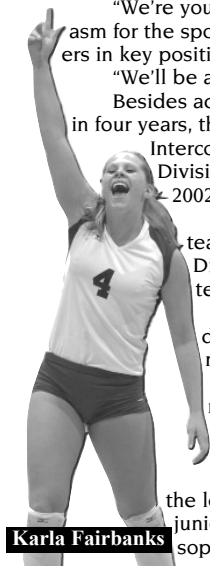
"Our schedule is tough as always, but we're excited about the challenges ahead," Brandel-Wilhelm said. "We'll play many of the top teams from our region and the nation throughout the season."

Ferris will play its first 12 matches this campaign away from Ewigleben Sports Arena where FSU posted its sixth undefeated home season (8-0) in the facility last year. All eight home matches in 2003 are against league opponents, including 2002 NCAA-II Tournament qualifiers Grand Valley State and Northwood.

"The conference is stronger than ever and the schedule will be demanding," said Brandel-Wilhelm. "It will be a challenge, but we will be up to the task."



Ashley Green



Becky Thurau

Returns

No.	Player	Pos.	Yr.	Ht.	Exp.
2	Lauren Heine	MH	So.	6-1	1L
4	Karla Fairbanks	OH	Jr.	5-11	2L
5	Becky Thurau	MH	So.	6-4	1L
11	Emily Clouse	S	So.	5-9	1L
12	Ashley Green	S	Jr.	5-9	2L
13	Brittney Godlewski	OH/LIB	So.	5-7	1L
16	Sarah Miller	RS	So.	6-3	1L

Newcomers

No.	Player	Pos.	Yr.	Ht.	Exp.
6	Danielle Baucher	OH	Fr.	5-10	HS
8	Jamie Palazzolo	OH	Fr.	5-7	HS
9	Keagan Krauss	OH	Fr.	5-10	HS
14	Molly Pickvet	MH	Fr.	6-0	HS
15	Karla White	MH	Fr.	6-0	HS

MH – Middle Hitter OH – Outside Hitter S – Setter
RS – Right-side Hitter LIB – Libero