



2001 SEASON PREVIEW

In five seasons at the helm, head coach **Tia Brandel** has brought national recognition back to the Ferris State women's volleyball program.

Over the past three years, the Bulldogs have compiled a 72-27 (.730) mark and have posted three-straight 20-win campaigns. FSU has garnered four winning campaigns in the past five years and reached the NCAA Division II Great Lakes Regional Tournament in 1999.

To say the least, the program has been very successful during the Brandel era.

For Ferris State to duplicate its recent success this season, the Bulldogs must hope an added season of experience and a crop of talented newcomers can replace the loss of five letterwinners, including two of the premier players in school history (Sarah VanderMolen and Morgan Buckner).

"Initially, it will be important to integrate the new players into our system," Brandel said. "We want to make sure we maintain a cohesive unit that is focused on our mission to be among the nation's top programs - both on the court and in the classroom."

If Ferris State hopes to reach the regional tournament and contend for an Elite Eight appearance this season, the Bulldog fortunes will likely hinge on the play of experienced senior **Erin Minnis**.

A 6-0 middle hitter, Minnis tallied a team-high 393 kills a year ago while garnering first-team All-Great Lakes Region recognition. The standout veteran earned first-team All-Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (GLIAC) honors as a junior and is poised to become the 11th player in school history to record 1,000 career kills. She enters the season with 712 career kills.

Junior **Alaina Olds** will solidify the other front row spot. The Kingsley native started 14 matches a year ago, ranked fourth on the squad in total kills (215) and led the Bulldogs in blocks per game (1.09).

Behind Minnis and Olds, FSU also returns junior middle hitter **Angie Desmarais**. A two-year letterwinner, Desmarais saw action in 20 matches as a reserve last year.

On the outside, battle-tested veteran **Kate Pickvet** is back for a third season. During the 2000 campaign, Pickvet totaled 208 kills and 47 blocks.

"We are deeper at a couple of positions than we have been in the past," Brandel said. "Enthusiasm and excitement will be strengths for us. We should have an athletic team, which will allow us to play a fast-paced, high-level style of volleyball."

Juniors **Erin Rind** and **Stephanie Speed** are expected to be key contributors at the other outsider hitter position. Speed compiled 46 kills and averaged 2.14 digs per game in her first season at Ferris State. Rind picked up her second FSU letter as she saw action in 20 matches and had 40 kills during the 2000 campaign.

"In past years, our playing has limited how much we have been able to use different players," Brandel said. "That shouldn't be the case this season as we will have more versatility in that area."

A 2001 co-captain, Reed City native **Emily Williams** will compete for time at the setter position. The energetic Williams is a crowd favorite and has experience in three collegiate programs.

In the back row, FSU will count on the services of sophomore **Sarah Dehring** at the defensive specialist position. Dehring will see a significant increase in

playing time with the departure of tri-captain Libby Martz and three-year letterwinner Amanda Kane.

"Our group of returnees is extremely close and dedicated to the success of the program," Brandel said. "They are friends who truly enjoy their time together, and they are competitors who will work hard to push each other."

A pair of redshirt freshmen, **Annie Foster** and **Nichole Valuch**, lead a host of newcomers. Both Foster and Valuch spent the 2000 campaign adjusting to the college game and should benefit from the added experience.

Highly-regarded prep standouts **Brittany Henson** and **Karla Fairbanks** are expected to add immediate depth at the outside and rightside hitter positions. Henson led Brighton High School to four district championships and a 47-1 conference mark during her high school career while the 5-11 Fairbanks was a two-time first-team all-state selection and earned Most Valuable Player honors at Rogers City three times.

The addition of freshmen **Becky Thurau** and **Sarah Miller** will give the Bulldogs much-needed size in the middle. The 6-4 Thurau attained first-team *Detroit News* All-Metro honors at Birmingham Groves High School while the 6-3 Miller was a two-time first-team all-region selection at John Glenn High School in Bay City.

Prep standout **Ashley Green** will challenge Williams at the setter position. A second-team 2000 Pennsylvania Volleyball Coaches Association (PVCA) All-State pick, the determined Green is expected to produce immediately.

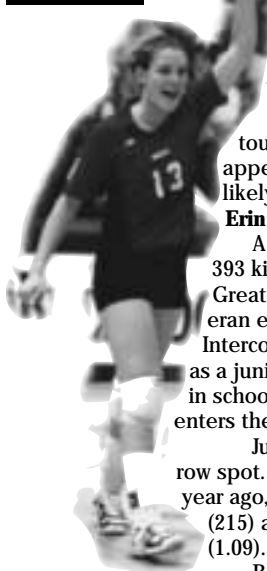
Freshman **Marissa Leusby** could be the sleeper of the 2001 recruiting class. The latest in a long line of Reed City products to play at Ferris State, Leusby missed most of her senior season with an ACL injury. She received second-team Class B all-state accolades as a junior after leading the Coyotes to a state runner-up finish.

"I expect our incoming class to make an impact," Brandel said. "We will certainly gain a great deal of depth and two or three of them will play a large role this season."

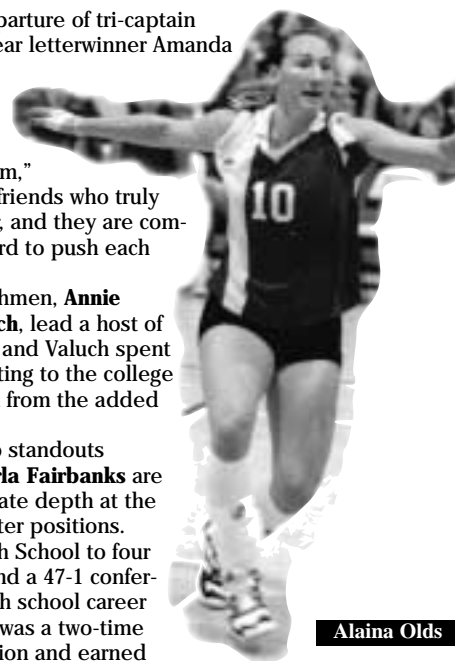
According to Brandel, the young Bulldog squad must consistently develop if FSU is to challenge in the always-tough GLIAC race.

"From top to bottom, there will not be a better Division II volleyball conference," Brandel said. "Our primary goal will be to get better every day. With a daily focus on hard work and improvement, our outcomes will be high."

Erin Minnis



Alaina Olds



Kate Pickvet

Returns

No.	Player	Pos.	Yr.	Ht.	Exp.
1	Stephanie Speed	OH	Jr.	5-8	1L
3	Emily Williams	S	Sr.	5-6	1L
6	Sarah Dehring	DS	So.	5-10	1L
7	Angie Desmarais	MH	Jr.	5-11	2L
9	Erin Rind	OH	Jr.	5-10	2L
10	Alaina Olds	MH	Jr.	5-11	2L
13	Erin Minnis	MH	Sr.	6-0	3L
14	Kate Pickvet	OH	Jr.	5-11	2L

Newcomers

No.	Player	Pos.	Yr.	Ht.	Exp.
2	Brittany Henson	OH/RS	Fr.	5-11	HS
4	Karla Fairbanks	MH/OH	Fr.	5-11	HS
5	Becky Thurau	MH	Fr.	6-4	HS
8	Annie Foster	OH	Fr.	5-10	R
11	Nichole Valuch	OH	Fr.	6-0	R
12	Ashley Green	S	Fr.	5-9	HS
15	Marissa Leusby	OH/RS	Fr.	5-10	HS
16	Sarah Miller	MH/RS	Fr.	6-3	HS

MH - Middle Hitter OH - Outside Hitter S - Setter
 RS - Right-side Hitter DS - Defensive Specialist