

2010 Men's Volleyball Season Outlook

The growth continues.

Grand Canyon University begins its second season of men's volleyball in 2010 with a lot of new faces and a new conference.

After one season of playing as an independent, the Antelopes are part of one of the nation's top conference, the Midwestern Intercollegiate Volleyball Association (MIVA). GCU joins the likes of Ohio State, Ball State, Loyola-Chicago, IPFW, Lewis and Quincy.

"It's great for our school to be associated with one of the top two conferences in the country," said GCU head coach Chad Speer.

Ohio State, Ball State, Loyola-Chicago and Lewis all finished last season in the nation's Top 15. Ohio State reached the Final Four for the second straight season.

GCU, picked sixth in the preseason MIVA poll, will head into the season with another very youthful group.

With only four players (three eligible players) back from last season, the 2010 group will learn and grow as the season progresses.

Sophomore outside hitter Taylor Griffin is one of the returnees. He was last year's top hitter averaging 2.82 kills per game. Sophomore middle blocker Brennan Zotovich is back after leading the team in blocks (62) in 2009. Also back with playing experience is sophomore libero Dan Ballenger (41 digs).

Eligible for his sophomore season is University of Hawai'i transfer Brock Hutchins. The outside hitter and former Arizona High School Player of the Year is expected to pay immediate dividends.

Another transfer, Nick Jensen, from NJIT, is the team's tallest player at 6-8. He will add much needed experience to the GCU middle.

The rest of the team is made up of talented freshmen. GCU grabbed a trio each from California and Illinois. Setter Brad Moore, libero Trent Bruns and middle blocker Chris Lockwood represent California, while hitters Robbie Brannick, Connor Dougherty and Kyle Olszewski come from the Midwest.

Other frosh expected to get opportunities are hitters Zach Neilson, Tyler Capko and Carter Mackey.

"We're much younger than last year," said Speer. "Last year we were new but had 25, 26 and 28-year olds. This year we're 18 and 19. I think we're more talented, but much younger."