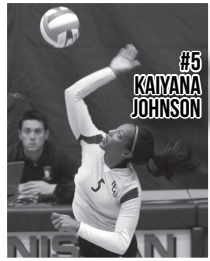


BETHUNE-COOKMAN VOLLEYBALL 2010

In 2009, the LadyCats of Bethune-Cookman volleyball built off a strong 2008 conference finish, showing progress akin to all teams in the Head Coach Vanessa Cogswell era. Despite mixed non-conference results, B-CU finished well in conference, but ultimately fell short of team goals for reaching the MEAC Volleyball Championships final, knocked out in the semifinal match. With the loss of long-term program fixtures, 2010's LadyCats look to make waves with a largely young, but experienced roster heavy in talent.

"We proved that the great championship tournament appearance in 2008 was not just a fluke, and we are legitimate contenders to win the MEAC Championship," said Head Coach Vanessa Cogswell. "It was the first time Bethune-Cookman had advanced to the semifinals in consecutive years, which gives us more motivation to work even harder this upcoming season."

Bethune-Cookman returns the majority of their roster and four primary starters. Cogswell's emphasis on preparing for players to be off the floor aids the changeover, but four players not returning are in key positions. Setter Daryl Rodriguez played a major role in creating excellent isolation situations for the LadyCat Hitters, while her backup, Julie Gibson, will not return in 2010. This leaves B-CU without a true experience setter in 2010. Defensively, B-CU graduated two-year starting Libero Shakhea Moore-Hagins, whose ball placement set up a quicker attack for the 2009 offense. The biggest challenge is replacing four-year starter, two-time second team All-MEAC selection, Chelle Ticeson, at Middle Blocker. With the exception of Setter, the roster is not without experienced talent behind the losses, and Coach Cogswell expects new starters to rise to the challenge.



The top returning player for the LadyCats is senior Hitter and Middle Blocker Kaiyana Johnson, who played 93 sets and was named a MEAC All-Tournament team selection. Johnson led the team in blocks (73 TB, 66 BA, 7 BS), finished second in hitting percentage (.276), and third in kills (179, 2.67 k/s), points (222, 2.39 pt/s), and sets. She will assume the role at Middle Blocker, left by Ticeson's graduation. Another strong returner, Jessica Wilson, finished second on the team in kills (227, 2.67 k/s), points (252, 2.96 pt/s), and digs (184) over 85 sets at Outside Hitter.

Another aspect to the existing team talent for 2010 is the returns B-CU got from last year's recruiting class. Three freshmen played extensively last season and shined, gaining key experience for the success of this team.

"It has been amazing," Cogswell commented. "Krysta [Gardner], Jacqueline [Woodyear], and Janeen [Davis] have been key for us in a number of games. I have never had three freshmen out on the floor at the same time prior to this past season, which attests to their great talent and work ethic. It is very exciting as a coach, knowing I have three more years to work with them."

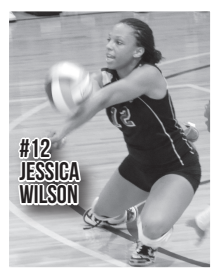
Setter is a mystery going into the season, as the starting role will likely shake out in late preseason. With no 'true' experienced setter on the roster, the incoming recruits will be expected to take charge; freshman Alexis Bliese and transfer Frances Rodriguez. If needed, Jessica Wilson is strong offensively and defensively at Outside Hitter, but additional talent at the OH could send her to setter, keeping the best athletes on the floor.

"It is not exactly a position that a coach would like to be in," noted Cogswell, "but [I'm] definitely excited to bring in new setters and get them quickly acclimated to the system we like to run."

Kaiyana Johnson is the top candidate to carry the weight of filling the Middle Blocker position. Sydney Smith (1.17 k/s) will back Johnson at the net, a true MB returning from a reserve OH role.

Defensive Specialist returns experience to the floor, with a greater impact expected from sophomore contributor Jacqueline Woodyear (153 digs), in addition to further leadership coming from senior Shanicka Reddick (123 digs), a two-year contributor.

Outside hitter, likely will be the deepest position for the LadyCats, boasting four returning contributors in Gardner, Davis, Wilson, and Linda Nwabuko, who accounted for 505 kills and a .130 hitting percentage.



"The overall philosophy is 'The Commitment to Excellence,'" said Cogswell, "but the foundation to that is for players to lead by example and 'play for each other', because the team comes before any individual."

