

Coach hopes this will be a breakthrough year

By SCOTT CRISPELL
Sports Writer

Dallas VOLLEYBALL

Now in her fourth year as head girls volleyball coach at Dallas High School, Richelle Straka is hoping 1996 will be a breakthrough season for the Mountaineers.

The Mounts have shown steady improvement since Straka's first season and finished 7-8 overall a year ago.

With five starters returning from that team, Straka and the Mounts are thinking playoffs.

"We've gotten better every year since I came to Dallas," said Straka. "We're hoping that this is the year we turn the corner."

Senior Stacey Engler returns at setter along with classmates Angie Austin and Emily Schweitzer at hitter and defensive specialists, while Lori Buzin is back at defensive and serving specialist.

"Stacey is back at setter and provides us with experience," said Straka. "Setting is the most crucial aspect of the game and having an experienced player at that position is a tremendous advantage."

Austin and Schweitzer will be



Dallas Girls' Volleyball - First row from left: Shannon Harkins, Kim Derhammer, Chrissy Duris, Victoria Ziegler, Vanessa Velikis, Rachel Hiller, second row: Kathryn Allen, Kerry DeAngelo, Jen Roman, Angie Austin, Shannon Caboot, Joey Walko, Jenelle Kerr, Pattie Smith, Danielle Jones, Misty Cook; third row: assistant coach Kevin Straka, Jamie Gavin, Shannon Gaffney, Virginia Leah Sarti, Lori Buzin, Sarah Podeshi, Stacey Engler, Emily Schweitzer, Heather Deeble, Tara Holly, Virginia Ziegler, Stefanie Simoncavage, Richelle Straka.

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Richelle Straka
Dallas volleyball coach

high school gym at the onset of practice due to maintenance problems. Straka feels the squad is starting to come together. "We're battling the clock due to our limited practices in our gym, but we're starting to have some really good practices," she explained. "We've got the drills and skills out of the way and our really starting to concentrate on our game plan."

Another factor that should benefit this team is its attitude. "This is the best team attitude I've seen since I've been at Dallas," said

Straka. "The players are working very hard. It makes my job easier when I'm dealing with players who are willing to learn and work hard. We also have some players in new positions and they have handled the transition extremely well."

Dallas will open the season September 5 against Meyers.

"We're looking forward to the season," said Straka. "We hope to improve our overall record and qualify for one of the three district playoff berths."

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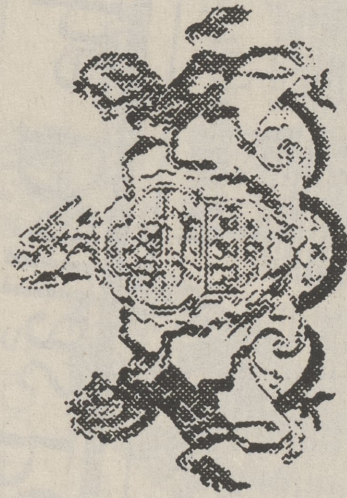
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