

# ARKANSAS TECH UNIVERSITY

***ATHLETICS***

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## **TECH VOLLEYBALL CONTINUES PRESEASON WORKOUTS WITH THREE-A-DAY PRACTICES**

**RUSSELLVILLE, Arkansas** – Arkansas Tech Volleyball opened up preseason workouts on Monday and is nearing the end of its first week of practice and so far the results have been positive.

"I'm extremely pleased with the way our team has competed so far in preseason workouts," Tech Head Volleyball Coach **Kristy Kale** said. "It's a competitive group this season. Even though we're young, I can see that competitive maturity from our returning players on the court and our younger players are feeding off of it."

Kale is excited about this season for her third Golden Suns team as they were picked to finish second in the preseason Gulf South Conference West Division Coaches Poll and return five starters and eight letterwinners from last season's 25-12 team that finished with a 9-5 mark in the GSC and lost in five games to Alabama-Huntsville in the first round of the GSC Tournament.

"We have returned a majority of our talent from last season and that talent is a year more seasoned," Kale said. "In addition, we have added a strong class of seven freshmen."

The Golden Suns team this season features no seniors on its 15-player roster and has only two juniors. The bulk of the team is either sophomores (six) or freshmen (seven).

"I can't remember if I've ever coached or played on a team that didn't have any seniors on it," said Kale, who has a 38-29 record at Tech entering her third season in Russellville.

Kale says that this year's team is very versatile and different than her previous two teams at Tech.

"I can't say if this team is better than the first two I've had, but I can say that this team is versatile," said Kale. "We're very athletic. We're throwing things at them and they've been able to pick things up and adjust pretty well and are quick learners."

Kale said that the team's seven freshmen are doing well in making the adjustment from high school to college volleyball.

"They're learning and have caught on well to way we do things here at Tech and that has been encouraging," Kale said.

Kale said that freshmen outside hitters **Kirsten Boyd** (Russellville, Ark.) and **Natosha Saltus** (Norman, Okla.) have really provided a boost to her team's offense early in the preseason.

"Kirsten and Natosha are dynamic players and both of them have a lot of versatility with our offense," said Kale.

One area of concern for Kale is at middle blocker where sophomore **Dana Florian** (Wilmington, Ill.), who averaged 1.02 blocks per game last season, is the only returner player at the position. In addition to Florian, freshmen **Katie Coulter** (Russellville, Ark.), **Katie Stamm** (Marysville, Mich.) and **Jackie Spencer** (Normal, Ill.) are listed as middle blockers on this year's roster.

"We are very, very young and inexperienced in the middle with the exception of Dana and it is going to take some work offensively," the third-year Tech coach said. "We're just going to have to keep working on getting our middle offense down."

Kale said that her team will continue to practice three times a day for the next week or so before scaling back to two-a-day workouts leading up to the beginning of school on Aug. 23.

The Golden Suns are scheduled to open its 2006 season on Aug. 25-26 by hosting the second annual Golden Suns Spikefest at Tucker Coliseum. Tech will open the tournament on Aug. 25 against Fort Valley State at 1 p.m. Other teams in the two-day event include Texas A&M-Commerce, Washburn (Kan.) and Drury (Mo.) University.

#### **Other Tech Volleyball News:**

\* - Kale announced that her team will conduct a Green and Gold Scrimmage at 12 p.m. on Sunday, Aug. 20 at Tucker Coliseum. The public is invited to attend the scrimmage and admission is free.

\* - Sophomore setter **Kayla Allison** (Tulsa, Okla.), a Second-Team All-GSC selection in 2005, was named a Preseason All-GSC West Division selection in the GSC Preseason Coaches Poll.

\* - Kale said that last season's Golden Suns team set a new single-season school record for digs with 2,662, which bettered the previous school record of 2,376 set in 1989.

**-- Tech Athletics --**