

UIS' Riggle knows what to expect in GLVC

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If University of Illinois Springfield volleyball players are looking for advice about what to expect as the school moves from NAIA to NCAA Division II and joins the Great Lakes Valley Conference, they need to look no further than Angie Riggle.

The first-year UIS coach played in the Great Lakes Valley at Quincy University. Riggle is thrilled her players have the opportunity to experience what she did in college.

"I'm very excited," Riggle said. "I played at the Division II level and played in GLVC. I know how the competition is and how competitive this conference is."

UIS, which had a 17-22 record in 2008, was voted to finish 13th out of 15 teams in the GLVC volleyball coaches preseason poll. Lewis University was picked to win the league.

Riggle expects her Prairie Stars to face their first test right out of the gate at the season-opening Christian Brothers University Tournament on Friday and Saturday in Memphis, Tenn.

The Stars' roster is sprinkled with seasoned players. Of the 12 players, seven are returnees.

Sophomore outside hitter Cayla Baggerly averaged 2.66 kills per game last season. Senior right-side hitter Sarah Cooper averaged 2.23 kills. Junior outside hitter/middle hitter Kimberly Bartosiak followed with 2.21 kills.

The experience will prove pivotal in helping new setter Carrie Gerberding blend into the rotation. Gerberding was a regular in last year's lineup. However, she was used more as a defensive player, according to Riggle.

"Carrie is probably our one true setter on the team, but honestly we don't even have a set lineup today," Riggle said Tuesday afternoon. "I watch a lot of things in practice and warm-ups. It is that

competitive between the girls that anybody can go out and play.

“Defensively, we’re going to be a pretty strong team. We’re a well-rounded team. There is no one particular area where we excel at more so than the other. Everybody contributes.”

Women’s soccer

Year 2 of women’s soccer at UIS kicks off with the Stars’ home opener Friday against Blackburn.

“We have two games (Blackburn and MacMurray) before we play Rockhurst, which is our first league game,” UIS coach Pete Kowall said. “Hopefully in those two games, we make slight improvements. While we’re going to make improvements, our league is going to be very strong.”

Of the 18 players, 10 are new to the roster.

Having sophomore Kelli Kubal back in goal should help UIS. Junior Erin Staley returns at center defender.

“Right now we have three freshmen (Kristen Haneberg, Liz Perrenot and Sydney Alstott) starting on the back line,” Kowall said. “For Erin and Kelli it’s going to be kind of a big job to make sure they organize in the back.

“Kristen and Liz come from very good club and high school backgrounds. They played at a high level of club in high school, so tactically there’s not much that they don’t know. It’s just a matter of adjusting to each other.”

Kowall expects the Stars, who posted a 4-8 overall record in their inaugural season, to play more possession soccer this season.

“This year we’ll possess the ball a little bit better,” he said. “Technically, we’re a little bit better.”

Sophomore Beth Rayman is the team’s top returning scorer. She netted seven goals in 2008.

Additional scoring could come from junior returnee Casey Thorpe and freshmen Kaitlyn Ebarb and Taylor Heissinginger.

UIS was voted to finish 15th in the GLVC women's soccer preseason coaches poll. The University of Wisconsin-Parkside is the favorite.