

ARKANSAS TECH UNIVERSITY

ATHLETICS

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VOLLEYBALL SET TO BEGIN PLAY IN 2008 GULF SOUTH CONFERENCE TOURNAMENT FRIDAY AGAINST MONTEVALLO

PENSACOLA, Florida – Arkansas Tech Volleyball is set to begin play here Friday in the 2008 Gulf South Conference Tournament held here at the UWF Fieldhouse on the campus of the University of West Florida. The Lady Argonauts, who are ranked 15th in the latest Bison/AVCA D-II Top 25 Coaches' Poll, are the tournament host this year after winning the East Division title with a perfect 12-0 record.

Tech, who is sporting a 31-4 overall record, enters this year's tournament as the No. 1 seed out of the West Division as the Golden Suns posted an 11-1 overall mark in West Division title to take home its first division title since 2000 and along the way snapped Harding's six-year run of West Division championships. The Golden Suns open the tournament on Friday at 2:30 p.m. in the second of four quarterfinal matches against Montevallo (20-17 overall, 6-6 GSC), the No. 4 out of the East Division.

On Saturday, Nov. 15, the four Friday winners will meet in the semifinals at 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. and the semifinal winners will meet in the league's championship match at 8:15 p.m. that same day. The winner of the GSC Tournament receives the league's automatic berth into the NCAA Division II Volleyball Tournament.

"I expect our team to come here into this year's tournament with more confidence since we are the No. 1 seed," Tech Head Coach **Kristy Bayer** said prior her team's practice Thursday at Pensacola Junior College. "Our goal is that we expect to come in here and win the tournament."

Tech, who went 6-2 during the regular season against the teams that qualified for this year's tournament, hasn't faced Montevallo since posting a five-set win in 2005.

"We have watched a lot of film on Montevallo and I feel like our team has some good background on what they like to do and their personnel," said Bayer, who was named the GSC West Division Coach of the Year on Wednesday.

Unlike the East Division, which sports two dominant teams in West Florida (26-7 overall, 12-0 GSC) and North Alabama (22-10 overall, 10-2 GSC), the West Division featured some balance this season as the top three teams combined to go 28-8 against West Division foes, including CBU collecting a three-set win over Tech on Oct. 30 in Memphis, Tenn.

"The West Division was very balanced this season," Bayer said.

The West Division hasn't taken home the GSC Tournament crown since Harding won the league title in 2003. Since joining the league in 1995, Tech is 9-12 all-time in the GSC Tournament, including finishing as runner-up on three different occasions

(1999, 2000 and 2002). Last season, the Golden Suns, who was the No. 3 seed from the West Division, fell in three sets to North Alabama in the first round.

The Golden Suns enter this weekend's GSC Tournament as the league's No. 1 team in hitting percentage (.276) and also leads the league in blocks per set (2.16), service aces per set (2.10) and opponents hitting percentage (.132). In addition, Tech is also averaging 13.60 kills and 14.81 digs per set.

Leading the way for Tech is the All-GSC West Division foursome of senior outside hitter **Racheal Urquhart** (Chatham, Ont.), senior middle blocker **Dana Florian** (Wilmington, Ill.), senior setter **Kayla Allison** (Tulsa, Okla.) and sophomore middle blocker **Sarah Von Lienen** (Lakeland, Tenn.). Urquhart, who was a First-Team All-GSC West Division selection, leads Tech in kills with 321 and is second in digs with 283 and has also recorded 30 service aces. In addition, she holds the school's career marks in kills (1,565), digs (1,404), double-figure kill matches (80) and double-figure dig matches (66), while Florian, who was a Second-Team All-GSC West Division honoree, averages 2.56 kills and 0.87 blocks per set and is hitting .292 on the season. Florian is the school's career Division II leader in blocks with 496 and is also fifth in career kills (1,290) and fourth in career double-digit kill matches (68). Allison, who was a four-time All-GSC West Division selection, including a First-Team selection the past two years, is averaging 9.99 assists and 2.04 digs per set and is the school's all-time leader in career assists with 5,146 and Von Lienen, who was a First-Team All-GSC West Division selection, is averaging 2.62 kills per set and is hitting .362 on the season. She has had 12 double-figure kill matches and has had five or more blocks in 13 matches.

Meanwhile, Montevallo returns to the GSC Tournament for the first time since 2003 as the Lady Falcons are sporting a 20-17 overall record and a 6-6 mark in the GSC East Division. The Falcons are hitting .202 as a team and are averaging 12.45 kills, 15.19 digs and 1.79 blocks per set.

Leading the way for the Lady Falcons is senior outside hitter Lauren Tortorici, who is averaging 2.58 kills, 2.94 digs and 0.45 blocks per set, while her twin sister, Monika Tortorici, is hitting .248 and is averaging 2.41 kills, 1.66 digs and 0.63 blocks per set. In addition to the Tortorici sister, junior outside hitter Katy Hendrick is averaging a team-best 2.74 kills per set, while junior right side hitter Katie Johnson is averaging 2.41 kills, 1.66 digs and 0.63 blocks per set on the season.

Besides Tech-Montevallo, the other quarterfinals matches on Friday are **North Alabama** (22-10 overall, 10-2 GSC), the No. 2 seed from the East Division facing **Christian Brothers** (25-9 overall, 8-4 GSC), the No. 3 seed from the West Division at 12 p.m. The other quarterfinal matches are **Harding** (23-8 overall, 10-2 GSC), the No. 2 seed from the West Division facing **West Alabama** (22-10 overall, 7-5 GSC), the No. 3 seed from the East Division at 5 p.m. and tournament host **West Florida** (26-7 overall, 12-0 GSC) meeting **Arkansas-Monticello** (18-17 overall, 4-8 GSC), the No. 4 seed from the West Division, at 7:30 p.m.

All the matches at this year's tournament will feature live stats on West Florida's website (www.goargosgo.com) and also all the matches will feature live web streaming via Penn Atlantic (www.pennatlantic.com). The cost of the web streaming is \$4.95 per match. You can access the web streaming by logging on to the GSC's website at www.gulfsouthconference.org.

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