

Sports

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Volleyball: Swanson brings higher expectations to UCHS in year two

By Todd Forrest
Sports Editor
sports@ngame.com

Year two of Union County Volleyball got underway Wednesday, Aug. 1 with first-year head coach Megan Swanson at the helm.

With the graduation of only three seniors, combined with Union County's departure of Class AAA for AA, Swanson is expecting to crack the win column a few times this fall.

"For them to be new to (volleyball) I already have high hopes for this season," Swanson said. "They show a lot of promise and I hope to have some success and win some games."

After hosting Hiwassee Dam on Senior Night to close out 2017, the Lady Panthers open 2018 with a trip to Hiwassee Dam to face the Lady Eagles on Monday, Aug. 13.

The junior varsity will begin at 5 p.m. with the varsity to follow.

Union's first home match will involve three teams on Tuesday, Aug. 14 when Fannin County and White County visit for a 5 p.m. start.

The junior varsity will also be in action on Tuesday.

Opening week action wraps up Thursday, Aug. 16 when Union County hosts Pickens. The JV team takes the court at 5 p.m., followed by the varsity squad.

While official practice opened just last week, Swanson and her Lady Panthers have spent most of the summer perfecting their craft following tryouts in May.

"We've been practicing and conditioning two-days-a-week," Swanson said. "We just finished up with a three-day, six-hour-a-day camp so they've had a really intense kickoff to their season."

Swanson arrives at UCHS by way of Murphy, NC, where she was a player before becoming a coach. She taught at Murphy for seven years with the final



New Union County volleyball coach Megan Swanson addresses her squad last Wednesday, Aug. 1 -- the first day of official practice. Photo/Todd Forrest

five spent coaching volleyball.

After leading an established program for a half-decade, Swanson was asked what challenges a new program like Union County brings. And while the players at her previous school may have the edge in experience, no one can doubt the dedication of the girls at UCHS.

"It's different (coming to a second-year program) but the girls have worked very hard," she said. "They set aside their own time and money for training before I had even arrived here. Since then, we've been just picking up and hit the ground running."

Between the start of official practice and the season opener on Aug. 13, Swanson and the Lady Panthers look to iron out a few kinks while fine-tuning some other areas.

"We're focusing on getting our game strategies down, getting our starters set, and get-

ting some plays going," she said. "We want to focus on putting all of our skill-work together that we've been working on all summer."

At the end of the day, however, it's about more than just volleyball. Swanson expects her players to serve as respectful and amiable representatives of UCHS, both on and off the court.

"Pride and classiness are really big for me," she said. "I want people to be proud of our volleyball team. I want their character to be recognized. I want them to be classy but also competitive. I want people to look at them and be able to see their school pride on display."

"As for me, I'm just thankful to be here and be a part of this new, and hopefully winning, program."

The Union Co. Middle School gym will play host to all UCHS home volleyball matches.

UCHS VOLLEYBALL SCHEDULE 2018

8/13	Hiwassee Dam	JV 5:00	V 6:00	Away
8/14	Fannin/White	V/JV 5:00/6:00/7:00		Home
8/16	Pickens	V 5:00	JV 5:00/	Home
8/20	Andrews	V 6:00	JV 5:00	Away
8/21	Gilmer	V 6:00	JV 5:00	Home
8/23	Gordan Central	V 5:00	JV 4:00	Away
8/27	Hiwassee Dam	V 6:00	JV 5:00	Home
8/28	@Fannin w/Rabun	V/JV 5:00/6:00/7:00		Away
9/4	@Lake Oconee/Putnam *	V 5:00		Away
9/6	Gilmer	V 5:00		Away
9/10	Andrews	JV 5:00	V 6:00	Home
9/11	Rabun w/Lumpkin *	Varsity Only 5:00		Home
9/13	@White	V 6:00	JV 5:00	Away
9/18	Putnam*	V 5:00		Away
9/20	@East Hall w/Lanier Christian	V 5:00	JV 5:00	Away
9/25	Region Tournament	9/27	Region Tournament	



Union County volleyball practice photos by Todd Forrest