

Volleyball Championship Run Comes to Screeching Halt at the Regional

BY HANNAH SCHWARTZ

IT HAS BEEN A UNIQUE SEASON for the Golden Bear women's volleyball program, and it came to a heartbreaking end on November 17th in a loss against Washburn University in the Regional Championship. The team started the 2018 season ranked number two in the Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference (NSIC).

They were off to a strong start after sweeping Upper Iowa in the NSIC opener and followed that win with another sweep against Winona State during their home opener at the Gangelhoff Center. The Bears found a momentum early in the season that picked up ten consecutive wins and moved themselves back up to the number one spot in the NSIC.

There was a sudden upset of the winning streak in the middle of the season with a loss against Northern State and a sweep from the University of Minnesota–Duluth. The team fought back and added seven wins to their season record and yet again were in the number one spot, but not only within the NSIC. The Golden Bears were ranked #1 in the NCAA Central Region, giving them an opportunity to host their 10th Championship Tournament.

But every team has to deal with adversity. Late in the season two key players experienced injuries that resulted in a shift of rotations. The Golden Bears fought hard but unfortunately fell short in four conference games, making an appearance at the NCAA Central Region Tournament questionable. Senior Defensive Specialist, Taylor Soine, states, “Our biggest challenge this season has been overcoming injuries and being confident about our abilities as a team with those injuries.

We work hard every day in practice to make our team click and flow as a unit, and I'm always very confident in all of my teammates”.

Their hard work earned them a spot at regionals and an even chance at making it all the way. As reigning National Champions, the Golden Bears efforts and milestones during the 2018 season were recognized and they were given the fourth seed in the Central Region

State in the first round of the tournament. In their 64th match against the Mustangs, a team they lost to in four sets back on October 26th, the Golden Bears concluded the thrilling five set match with a win. Lewis described the game against the Mustangs as, “just another match,” when asked how they prepared for the team with whom they have so much history.

The Bears then advanced onto the semi-

finals, where they defeated Harding University in four sets and freshman Kennedy Brady had a career night with twenty-seven kills to help the squad. Following that game, the team matched up with Washburn in the Central Region Championship.

The match started out slow for the Golden Bears as they lost the first set, but were able to dominate the second and third, leading the match 2-1. Going into the fourth set, the Bears had another slow start and couldn't catch up to the Ichabods. It was a devastating loss with mini victories throughout. Lewis lead the game with

twenty kills and senior, Hope Schiller, performed a double-double with sixteen kills and twenty-four digs.

Both of them, along with Elizabeth Mohr and Tori Hanson, were also named to the All-Tournament Team. The Golden Bears have a lot to be proud of at the end of their 2018 season. †

Photography provided by Patrick Rydeen

Pictured is the team preparing before matchup in the Gangelhoff Center.



Tournament. Their appearance in the NCAA Division II Tournament bracket sent them to the tourney for the sixteenth year in a row.

Senior outside hitter, Brooklyn Lewis, who played a significant role in earning the Golden Bears a National Title in 2016 and 2017 and holds NSIC Honors for the 2018 season, states, “Unlike previous seasons, we became an underdog for a championship. This let us play with a little more freedom, so our individual personalities thrived on the court again. Our team performs best when everybody is able to just let go”.

The Golden Bears traveled to Nebraska – Kearney on November 15th to face the seventh ranked and fifth seeded Southwest Minnesota