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From Player to Coach: Volleyball sensation hopes to share skills after college

June 01, 2009 | Eric Brown

When recruiting new athletes to build up their programs, NCAA Division I coaches often go through a detailed process with each prospect

For Liberty University Head Volleyball Coach Shane Pinder, the quest to find a special player to build his team around was no exception. Fairly new to the job, he was willing to go the extra mile — even if that one mile turned into 3,000.

After receiving a recruiting tape and inquiry emails from Kallie Corbin, a talented high school setter from Beaverton, Ore., Pinder wanted to see the prospective player in person. The coach boarded a plane, flew out to California to talk with other recruits and then drove two hours to an Oregon YMCA to watch Corbin play. From the moment the setter stepped onto the court, it did not take long for Pinder to reach his verdict.

“The second I saw her touch the ball I said, ‘It’s a done deal,’” he recalled. “I didn’t even need to see her play.”

Training Champions for Christ



“I think it [being a champion] is having a goal that you’ve been praying about, something that is Christ-centered, and saying, ‘I’m going to reach for that goal.’ What Liberty is doing is training you to reach for those goals.” — Kallie Corbin

Upon graduating from high school, Corbin joined the Lady Flames roster, passing up offers from household names such as Florida State, UCLA and Oregon. Now heading into her senior year at Liberty, the setter has rewritten the program’s record books, becoming the first player in school history to tally over 3,500 assists and 1,000 digs.

Corbin’s exceptional play has helped the Lady Flames capture back-to-back Big South Conference titles en route to two first-round NCAA volleyball tournament appearances in the 2007 and 2008 seasons. In its first trip to the tournament since 2001, Liberty managed to take a set from No. 10 California before falling to the University of California, 1-3. On the bus ride back to Lynchburg, Va., the Lady Flames were upbeat, knowing they had played well against an eventual Final Four team.

Last season, Liberty produced a similar result with a different effect, squaring off against another Final Four team in No. 4 Nebraska. Mirroring their 2007 performance, the Lady Flames won a set against the Cornhuskers, but dropped the match 1-3. This time, the ride back home was far more somber than the previous year.

“We left there hurting,” Corbin said. “After that second set we were [telling ourselves], ‘We can do this.’”

Using the defeat as motivation, Corbin and the Lady Flames are seeking a three-peat as Big South Champions and another shot at advancing in the NCAA tournament in 2009.

“We take one game at a time, so we have to win our conference, but we really want to win that first round,” Corbin stated. “It’s going to hurt to leave here if we don’t.”

Although volleyball is one of Corbin’s passions, she does not define herself by her athletic prowess. Away from the nets, she is a true servant, who enjoys helping and motivating others. This past February, Corbin and other LU athletes organized and participated in Liberty’s first Polar Plunge, a fundraising event that supports the Special Olympics. The volleyball player gritted her teeth as she

jumped into a freezing cold lake at Camp Hydaway on Liberty Mountain. Together, she and 14 other plungers raised \$2,400 for the Lynchburg Special Olympics Program.

Instead of placing herself on a proverbial pedestal, Corbin uses athletics as a platform to share Christ's love with others.

During an LU basketball game this past season, she received an opportunity to meet and interact with local Special Olympics team members. Karyl Bacon, Corbin's teammate and close friend, noted the Oregon native's natural ability to put a smile on the faces of those she encounters.

Since childhood, Corbin has possessed a love for musical theater and enjoys attending performances and reading scripts. If Corbin's volleyball career were a theatrical production, she would certainly be a star of the show. However, once her collegiate days are over, Corbin's role will change. No longer will she dance on the grand stage of volleyball courts around the country, but instead will likely take a seat in the director's chair as a college coach.

"I was the rebellious person and said I would never coach, because that's what my dad said I would always do," she stated. "But that's something that has become a goal for me. I really do want to coach volleyball — hopefully in Division I, someday."

After graduation, Corbin hopes to begin working as a graduate assistant at Abilene Christian University, a Division II school in Texas. From there, she aspires to climb the coaching ranks while influencing the lives of collegiate volleyball players on and off the court.



Before she steps into the coaching scene, the upcoming senior must prepare for her closing act as Liberty's starting setter. During the offseason, Corbin and her teammates are working hard to produce an award-winning 2009 campaign.

"Every weight that we lift, every ball that we hit, we're training to be able to beat whoever we're going

to be placed against this year,” Corbin said. “We want to be at a level field or higher.”

Since the end of last year, Pinder has tried to keep the concept of finishing strong fresh in Corbin’s mind. Fully aware of his player’s appreciation for the arts, the coach looked at her following the 2008 season and said, “You know what they say about theater — it’s all about your encore.” If her previous three seasons are any indication of what this year could bring, fans are in for a special treat when Corbin takes the court this August for the start of her final performance.

“She’s a committed individual in everything she does,” Pinder said. “The bigger the match, the bigger the setting, the bigger the stage — she rises to the occasion.”

“I think the Liberty volleyball community is excited to see what she pulls off in that last year. Come opening day, she’ll be ready.”