

Volleyball veterans reflect on 4 years of play

Seniors explain leadership, team chemistry, first years of program, as group heads into playoffs

Allison Gully
News Editor

As the school’s volleyball team enters the playoffs and the seniors take the court as the leaders of the team, they look back to the program’s first years and how the group has evolved.

“I wish we could have recorded our very first practice ever,” senior Rachel Key said. “Coach Gould says that all the time. We couldn’t even pass to each other.”

Four years ago it was announced that the school would be adding volleyball to its list of athletic teams. This was a whole new sport for many of the players, but the athletes didn’t back away from the challenge.

“We didn’t know what we were doing, it was so different from anything else we had played,” senior Taylor Hoelscher said. “Somebody would throw the ball to us and we would catch it like a basketball.”

Most of the girls who decided to play started from scratch. They had to learn the very basic skills and the rotation, along with everything else in volleyball.

“I didn’t even know how

to hold my hands,” senior Macy Gully said. “I was like what is this?”

Senior Tara Weber jumped on the idea of a new athletic competition.

“I loved volleyball from the start,” Weber said. “Taylor [Hoelscher] didn’t want to play at first, but over the summer we played with each other and she figured out she was pretty good at it.”

The first step in building the volleyball program was summer league. This is where players learned the rules in a low pressure environment and put their new found skills to the test.

“As summer league went on you just started to know and learn,” Key said. “I remember a ball came over the net where I could’ve slammed it down, well I didn’t know that. I just watched it fall and Coach Gould was like, ‘you can hit the ball.’”

The team has moved from freeballs, when the ball goes over the net with a pass instead of a hit, to making complex plays.

“When we were first learning volleyball it was so sloppy,” senior Abby Eubank said. “Like the drills we do, we do over and over on a daily practice. When we first started out it was all about learning how to do the drills, now we can just do it. It’s habit.”



Weber



Junior Emmy Phillips gives sophomore Landry Oliver a celebratory hug after the team defeated Sonora Saturday to claim the first place seat in the District. “It was an exciting game,” Phillips said. “After we won it felt like a path was open for the rest of the playoffs.”

One of the main drills is called perpetual passing. The players rotate from serving and passing, and each pass is scored on a scale of one to three, depending on how close the ball gets to the designated target.

“I remember our goal the first time we ever did perpetual was 60 points in five minutes,” Weber said. “Now we’re up to 230 in five minutes. We’ve definitely improved.”

After one year of a junior varsity team, the team moved up to the big leagues and entered the world of varsity volleyball as a second year program.

“It put us up to the challenge,” Weber said. “We lost so many games and it was frustrating but once we started winning it all got better. It helped us, playing harder teams like that.”

Even though wins were hard to come by, the team grew better with each game.

“Seeing how other teams played, it made us better,” Gully said. “Watching Central play gave us ideas, like that’s what it’s supposed to look like. We want to

get there.”

These tough games early on show the vast improvements that have been made over the years.

“Everyone has gotten smarter,” senior Kriss Kellermier said. “The defense specialists are smarter with their passes, and the setters are better with their sets and where to take the ball. Hitters have learned the best place to put the ball down.”

This year’s volleyball program has nine seniors playing, more than any other previous year.

“Being together so long has made us ready for this season,” Gully said. “There’s a lot of team chemistry and we feel like we’re all capable of going to regionals.”

With such a diverse group, the seniors lead from different areas across the board.

“We all share the leadership,” Weber said. “If one of us is having an off game, one of us can step up and do better and keep the team going. The juniors help too, they’re leaders as well.”

Energy is everything with volleyball, the seniors keep that their focus.

“We just really try to build each other up and be encouraging,” Eubank said. “We

never are getting made at each other, we aren’t that team.”

Nerves can hinder the team, listening to music before and just being with each other helps the group remain calm and concentrate for the game ahead.

“Whenever we’re nervous it’s like you don’t want to make mistake,” Hoelscher said. “You don’t want to touch the ball.”

The team explains that even though their biggest strength is being encouraging and communicating, they can have some problems finishing.

“When we’re at 24 points we can’t finish our one point, ever,” Hoelscher said. “It’s always the next one. I don’t think we’ve ever gotten our 25th point on our first try.”

The team has bright prospects though as the season continues and they finish district as co-district champions.

“Our first goal is regionals and the second is definitely state,” Gully said.

Gully also explains how some things never change.

“Our fun level hasn’t changed at all through the years, we still have so much fun,” Gully said. “The game hasn’t gotten old at all. I could play forever I feel like.”



Varsity team members huddle together during a timeout. “In the huddles, we encourage each other and bring each other up because we tend to get down when we make mistakes,” senior Taylor Hoelscher said. “It’s all about unity.”

Dominating district

Senior leadership is key factor on girls, boys basketball teams



Senior Macy Gully looks up to the basket before going for the shot against TLCA. "Our district is fairly easy, Jim Ned is our toughest competitor so we always look forward to those games," Gully said. "We take each game seriously."



Sophomore Brock Rosenquist plays defense against the San Angelo Homeschool point guard. "The game started off slow but we played better as we went along," Rosenquist said. "That was earlier in the season so we didn't have the chemistry we do now."

Aspen Reed
Sports Editor

Looking up to seniors

Feeling both nervous and excited, the boys/girls step into the gym for the first time as a varsity player. Knowing what it was like to be the 'new kid' on the team, the seniors try to make the transition as easy as possible by giving them advice and helping them throughout practice.

"I was excited because I made the varsity team but at

the same time I was scared because I knew how important it is," freshman Abby Alexander said. "There is a lot of pressure that comes with playing a varsity sport."

Seniors understand what it is like to be a new player.

"I always try to set a good example by being positive toward the younger girls because I know they are shy," senior Hannah Carr said. "I remember when I first started out, I was nervous so I try to treat

them how I would have wanted."

Carr tells girls to play hard and not worry about messing up, it happens to everyone.

"When I moved up the older girls were very motivating and pushed me to work harder because it was my first year and they knew I was nervous," junior Karley Pettiet said. "They helped me and all the other girls a lot."

Upper classmen pass along their wisdom.

"I correct the younger classmen on their mistakes and encourage them throughout practice," senior Wyatt Huebner said.

Going from practices to real games intimidates some.

"I remember my first game was very nerve-racking because I was afraid I would mess up," Carr said. "The older girls just told me to do the best I could and not stress over it."

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Basketball

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Seniors give advice to help calm the nerves of younger players.

"Take it one position at a time, don't freak out, you're going to make mistakes, you just have to get over it and keep going," Huebner said.

Sometimes expectations are higher than reality.

"I thought varsity games would be a lot harder than they are," Pettiet said. "They are still hard but not as hard as I thought they would be."

Once the game starts the nerves are gone.

"I remember the first time I played a varsity game it was really fun and exciting," Alexander said. "We won the game by a lot and we had a lot of playing time because we didn't have a full team."

Once players get accustomed to being in the spotlight, it is easier to play.

"I was pretty nervous honestly playing my first game on varsity because everyone is

watching you and there is a lot of pressure to not make mistakes," Huebner said.

Feeling the pressure

Pushing through every practice and every game senior Maddi Chitsey has come far. Known as a state champion and future college player Maddi is looked up to by many. Being known so well and expected to play perfectly can sometimes be stressful.

"I deal with the pressure by taking it a game at a time, and not thinking too far ahead," Maddi said.

Maddi signed to play college ball at Lubbock Christian University.

"I know that I'll play again after high school but I still feel pressure because I love my team and I want us to succeed," Maddi said.

Even though the pressure continues Maddi's feelings for the game have never faded.

"I am excited that I get to continue my basketball career because I love the sport," Maddi said. "I'm also looking

forward to playing with my sister again."

Team bonding time

Sitting around the table talking and laughing, the team eats dinner before the game seemingly not worried about the competitor they are about to face. With each game and practice they have become close friends.

"We always go to each other's houses before games to have a team dinner," Pettiet said.

Teams find ways to become closer.

"We have team sleepovers which are really fun and we go out to eat together a lot," Carr said. "We just hang out together a lot and when we do we always have fun."

The boys' team finds their own ways to build team bonds.

"We all trash talk and mess around with each other but it's never anything serious," freshman Colton Chitsey said. "I think it's mostly out of love."

As the year goes on teams grow stronger.

"I work hard in practice along with my teammates," Carr said. "We continue to

build onto the bond we already have."

New lessons are picked up along the way.

"Because of the guys I've learned how to work together as a team more than I have in previous years," Colton said.

Team chemistry is critical.

"It's better to have a close relationship with everyone on the team," Huebner said. "We flow together easily on the court and we can correct each other and know how to take it without anyone getting upset."

Looking forward to district

The sweat drips down their faces as their chest heaves with every breath, as the team continues to push through practice. Knowing the farther they go the harder the games get, each player gives their all until that very last game comes.

"The more I think about it being my last year, the sadder I get but then I tell myself to give it everything I have and go out strong," Carr said.

While seniors perfect their game for the last year others work hard for the years to come.

"I'm working hard to be stronger with the ball because I don't want to turn it over all the time," Colton said.

Players try to master their skills in certain areas.

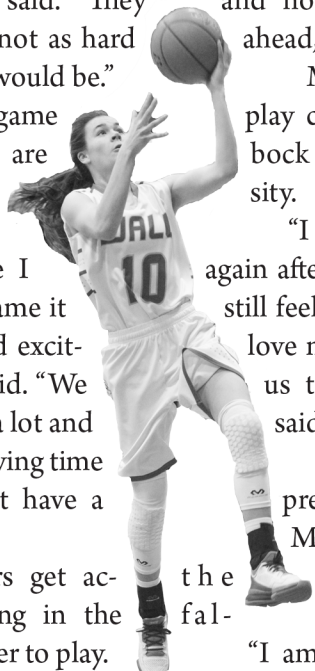
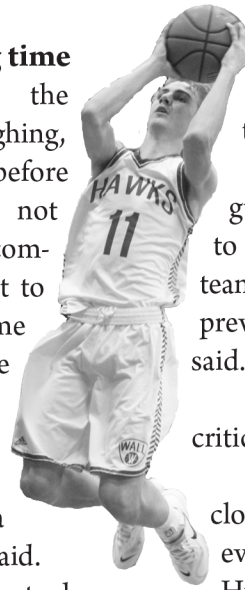
"During practices I go as hard as I can to know my limits and the things I'm capable of so that when it's game time I feel confident and know what I can and can't do," Alexander said. "After practice I even stay after and do a few extra things that I need to work on."

Oftentimes it is a mindset that can make the difference.

"I've taken this year more seriously," Huebner said. "I've practiced harder, and worked on things on my own because I know it's my last year and I want to make sure I have no regrets after it's over."

All await upcoming games for different reasons.

"I look forward to winning All District and going as far as we can as a team," Carr said. "I hope this season is one to never forget."



Hawks lasso Broncos in big game

Aspen Reed
Sports Editor

The stands were a sea of green that roared as the team raced out onto the field. Pumped up and excited, the boys were ready to start the game.

After Homecoming week was cut short by Labor Day on Monday, the four days of excitement led up to the grand finale of Homecoming night and the game against the southern rival, the Sonora Broncos.

"Before the game I was thinking that we better win because it's our homecoming game but I wasn't really worried that we would lose," senior Flavio Rocha said.

The players carried that winning mentality through the start of the game.

"At the very beginning of the game we started out strong and it was a great feeling to be a part of it," senior Dylan Lisoski said.

Sometimes the simplest things mean the most.

"My favorite part of the game was the very first play of the game because it was my first time playing in the homecoming game," sophomore Tymber Carr said.

It didn't take long for the action to build up.

"We forced quite a few quick turnovers in a row which took the defense off the field," senior Clayton Daniel said. "We were on offense for most of the game."

Although playing good and winning as a team are

the ultimate goals, personal achievements are a part of the excitement too.

"The highlight of the night for me was when I intercepted the ball," junior Ryan Walling said.

Mistakes are easily made and it takes hard work to correct them.

"If I could go back I would have not tripped on a play that would have been a touchdown," Rocha said. "Luckily, I made up for it and got it the

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Kids crown counselor



Fourth graders Sydney Herbert and Renly Weishuhn accompany counselor Jamie Glass as she walks down the sidewalk where all the elementary awaits. “She helps me when I have a problem or when I’m sad,” fifth grader Mary Hewitt said.

Bailey Muehlstein *Staff Writer*

Cheering from excited students, a plastic crown, and a white sash welcomes elementary counselor Jamie Glass one February morning as she begins her walk on the red-carpet

rolled out in honor of her latest accomplishment.

Glass, who has worked at Wall for almost seven years, was recently awarded Counselor of the Year by the Three Rivers Counseling Association for her hard-work and devotion to

students, staff, and school.

“I was nominated by two different people and had no idea,” Glass said. “It was definitely not something I’m used to, but I feel honored.”

Glass, assuming she was going into a meeting in a 5th

grade classroom, was cleverly tricked by elementary Principal Matt Fore and elementary students who were setting up outside for a celebration.

“When I came out of the classrooms I heard a lot of

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Students enjoy challenge hunting offers

Beau Scott

Staff Writer

Hunters have already begun their search for the witty whitetail of West Texas. Deer season started on Nov. 7 and continues through Jan. 3. Deer season provides a way for students to enjoy the ancient art of hunting and at the same time provide food for their family.

"I enjoy deer hunting because you get to watch the wildlife and you can provide deer meat for your family," freshman Shawn LaBedelle said.

Being immersed in nature is enough to make deer hunting an enjoyable hobby for some young hunters.

"I enjoy deer hunting because you get to be in nature and see animals that don't even know you are there," sophomore Dominic Kubenka said.

Deer hunting has been a lifelong activity for some students.

"My dad took me deer hunting for the first time when I was two years old and I've been going ever since," freshman Tate Jones said.

Hunters usually head to their family ranches or deer leases during the rut. The rut is a time when deer begin to search for mates, causing them to become more active.

"My favorite time to go deer hunting is in the evening, that's usually when the deer are in full rut," freshman Ryan Gully said.

By simulating deer spar-

ring with a pair of antlers, Jones was able to lure in a curious deer, showing how aggressive deer can become during the rut.

"My best deer hunting experience was when I was rattling and a buck came within about 15 yards," Jones said. "I had to make a split second shot."

Students find that deer hunting is also a great way to spend time with others.

"I go deer hunting with my dad and my brother," senior Faith Roberson said. "My dad got me into hunting at a young age and I have loved it ever since."

Others feel like hunting is more enjoyable when they are solo.

"I usually just go deer hunting by myself," Kubenka said. "I think it's more relaxing going by myself."

Many high school students have completed their hunter safety course, giving many of them the opportunity to create unique experiences hunting alone.

"The first time I went deer hunting solo it was kind of weird, there was no one to talk to," LaBedelle said. "It was the coldest day of the year and I had to drag the deer I shot about a mile in the rain and ice."

A favorite of hunters is sharing stories about the biggest buck they've shot or the craziest hunt they have gone on; and these students were

glad to share some of their experiences.

"The biggest buck I have shot was an 11 point buck with a drop tine and it scored 145," Roberson said. "My heart was beating really fast and I was making the whole blind shake because I was so nervous when I shot it."

Although these young hunters try to stay humble about their hunting accomplishments when given the opportunity they will gladly share.

"The biggest deer I shot was a 142 inch 10 point," Ryan Gully said.

While some hunters are in search of the biggest trophy, others prefer only harvesting

female deer.

"I don't hunt for antlers, the meat isn't as good as a doe," Kubenka said.

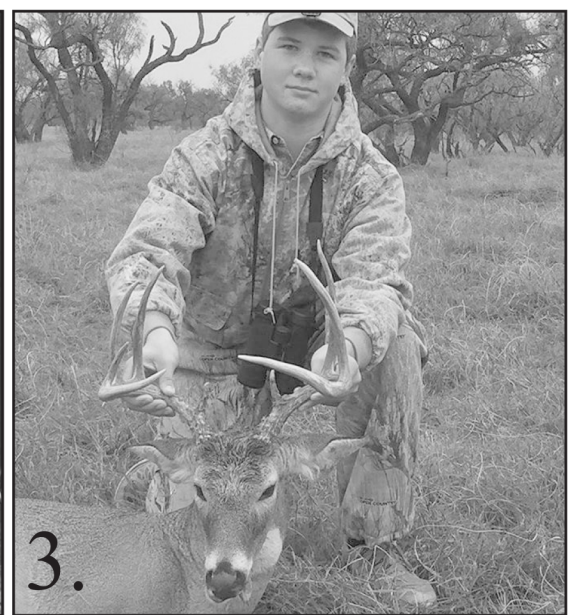
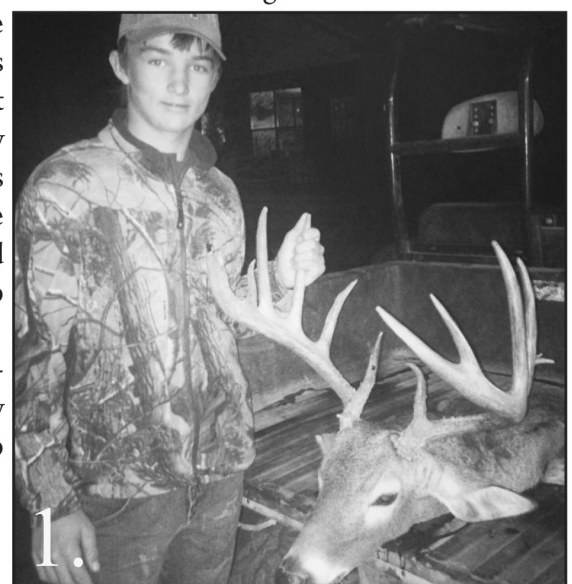
Hunters should be prepared for anything.

"The craziest deer hunting experience I have had was when I gut shot a deer with my bow," Jones said, "When we found it, it stood up and I had to shoot it again."

Deer hunting is a way for students to spend time with others while making memo-

ries and putting meat in the freezer.

"I enjoy deer hunting because I like the challenge of trying to find the biggest deer," Roberson said, "And of course eating the meat."



1. Freshman Ryan Gully shows off one of his trophy deer from this season. "This buck came in about 30 minutes after the feeder went off with a few does and a smaller buck," Gully said. "We were afraid we wouldn't be able to find him once it started getting dark." 2. Junior Faith Roberson displays her first cull buck of the season. "This was my first deer of the season, shot on kids' weekend," Roberson said. "We noticed it was a cull buck and had to be shot." 3. Freshman Tate Jones poses with his 8 point deer. "It was a morning hunt and the feeder went off around 7:45," Jones said. "This buck came in with a few does and spike, so I took my shot."