

The Eastern High School volleyball game had a lot of success until recent years. Former Head Coach Jacob Johanningsmeier won more than 20 games a season during his five-year stint.

Johanningsmeier left three years ago and since then two coaches have come and gone.

The school recently hired a third, Samantha Bradbury, to try to return the program to its winning ways.

Bradbury is a Paoli graduate and played one year of college ball before an illness forced her to step away from the game as a player.

She has spent the past six years coaching, five at the middle school level, and one, last year as a varsity assistant.

Bradbury said she new while assisting last year that being a head coach is something she wanted to do.

“When I moved up to help at the varsity I started to see all the ways I would be able to run a program, like running the systems I learned in college and developing younger players,” she said. “If we don’t start instilling these fundamentals at an early age that will eventually hurt the high school.”

As for the current high school team, she has only meet with them twice at the time this article was written, but she likes what she sees.

“We have a lot of talent,” Bradbury said. “A lot of them have told me they played club volleyball, which is awesome because that means they’ve played some in the off-season. We need to get in shape so we will be able to pass and do a lot of our hitting.

“Passing is our top priority. If we can get it down this summer, I think we have a chance to really compete and advance to the sectional.”

One of the ways to get in shape will be with two-a-day practices that will take place in the final weeks of summer.

“I put two-a-days on the schedule and I got some odd looks (from the players),” she said. “I guess they are not use to that, but hopefully I will help turn the program around and get them excited about the work that it takes to be winners.”

Providence is in Eastern’s Class 2A Sectional and all they did last year was win the state championship.

Bradbury says in order to make their squad players must run a mile in six minutes. She has not set the expectations there yet, but wants players to do 8.

And while beating Providence isn't likely to happen year one, that's where she wants to take the program.

"I'm not going to have high expectations and say we will win the sectional, but we are going to take it game by game and try to continue to improve throughout the season," she said.

Bradbury said her personal goals for this season include a better than .500 season and to win a game in sectional and be competitive.

As for what it will take to build the kind of program that can compete with the Providences and Brownstowns, Bradbury says it has to start by getting students playing volleyball at an earlier age.

The Lady Musketeers will host a camp for younger players later this summer and Bradbury has plans to try to start a team of fifth- and sixth-grade team pending a conversation with Middle School Athletic Director Tom Cullen.

"There should be plenty of teams to play against (at the fifth and sixth grade levels) and that will really help the girls get the idea of six-on-six play and serving over hand and really just working on basic fundamentals," she said.

When the job came open Eastern Athletic Director Scott Newcomb said they really wanted to find a coach who was not only committed to winning, but committed to building a program.

Bradbury said she meets all the requirements Newcomb spoke of.

"I hope to turn things around and stay for a while," she said. "We will have to push club ball and get these kids thinking about volleyball year-round with open gyms and off-season works out. I think the kids will see that we are trying to get better and will buy in."