

All-Time NAIA digs leader, Amy Eckenfels, named Campbellsville University volleyball head coach

By Chris Megginson, Campbellsville Sports Information Director

CAMPBELLSVILLE, Ky. -- Campbellsville University's most recognized name for women's volleyball is now its head coach. Amy Eckenfels, a former NAIA National Libero of the Year, was officially announced as the Lady Tigers' new head coach Dec. 11. She will begin her new role Jan. 4.

"This is an honor. I look at it as a tribute to the coaches that preceded me and their hard work to get us to the level we are now," said Eckenfels. "I have learned a lot playing and coaching with Coach (Randy) LeBleu. He has put everything into the Lady Tiger volleyball program and led the team to many great accomplishments. I know I have big shoes to fill."

The honor comes less than a week after she and out-going head coach Randy LeBleu led Campbellsville to its first-ever team national championship at the National Christian College Athletic Association (NCCAA) National Tournament in Kissimmee, Fla.

"Amy's love for Campbellsville University coupled with her experience as a coach and player made her the obvious choice to continue the great tradition of Lady Tiger volleyball," said Rusty Hollingsworth, CU athletic director. "Amy has played a major role in where the volleyball program has come because of her days as a two-time All-American and national player of the year."

Eckenfels has served the past two seasons as an assistant coach at CU and will become the first full-time volleyball head coach to only be responsible for volleyball. LeBleu, who served one year as an assistant and compiled a 172-52 record over five seasons as head coach, is turning his full time focus to baseball. He has served as CU's hitting and infielders coach since 2003.

"This is not an easy decision, but the right one for the volleyball program and for me personally," said LeBleu, who was named the 2009 NCCAA Division I Coach of the Year. "My six years with the volleyball program has been memorable. It has allowed me to grow as a coach ... It has been a great ride. A time I will cherish forever."

LeBleu led Campbellsville to two Mid-South Conference Championships and its first appearance in the NAIA National Volleyball Tournament in 2007.

"Coach LeBleu has done an outstanding job of taking our volleyball program to new heights. He has proven to be an excellent recruiter and coach. I'm very grateful for the hard work and dedication he provided this program for five years," Hollingsworth said.

"Our volleyball program is at the point it needed a full-time coach to spend time with the

team in a year round capacity. We have that opportunity with Coach Eckenfels.”

During LeBleu’s first year, he said Eckenfels was “the epitome of what we want our program to be,” as she broke the NAIA record for digs in a season and was named the NAIA Libero of the Year. Her record was broken in 2007, but Eckenfels still holds the record for career digs with 3,569 and is in the Top 4 in all other categories for digs.

“Any time you have an opportunity to hand over a program to the most decorated player in the history of the program, you cannot go wrong,” LeBleu said. “The players respect her because of what she has done.”

Her style of play that led to such honors is what she carries over into her coaching career.

“My philosophy is simple - out work the other teams,” Eckenfels said. “There may be days when we are outplayed by other teams, but there won’t be days when we are outworked.”

During her time as a player for LeBleu, Eckenfels helped Campbellsville beat rival Georgetown College for the first time and win the program's first Mid-South Conference Championship. Eckenfels said her vision for the program includes more Mid-South titles and the school’s first NAIA National Championship.

Eckenfels, a Louisville native, was not recruited heavily as a high school player at Mercy Academy until former head coach Billy Gregory brought her to CU.

“The first time I saw her play, I knew she was special,” Gregory said. “She could not be still on the court and her desire to keep the ball from hitting the floor was unmatched. There was not a ball that she didn’t try to get to; flailing and contorting her body in ways that did not seem possible...with recklessness and no regard for her body.”

Gregory said he recruited Eckenfels as the foundation on which the program was to be built. She had a competitive spirit he said that he has yet to be seen matched.

“Amy had high expectations of herself, teammates and coaches, and she will, without a doubt, instill those same qualities into her future players and once again have a very positive effect on CU volleyball,” he said.