

VETERANS

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“I feel a really great connection with our underclassman setter, Stella, and it really helped us to be able to communicate about what we need to work on with our hitters and know what sets to give everybody,” Daniels said. “I think just our overall communication has made us better. We’ve become a unit together.”

Warner has also noticed the connection between Daniels and Popham developed this offseason. She sees both of them in practice commanding the pace of how they want to play.

“They’re trying to connect with their hitters on what they need but trying to run and watch the block and know when to set and who by watching the defense and where the other team may fall short and making sure that we’re setting up for our strengths to shine through,” Warner said. “They’re defensively very, very good in that right pack position, and we may see Stella in the front row some this year. She puts up a good block, and she’s very smart on the net. I would see us being able to run a three-option offense at a better higher percentage than we did last year.”

Oldham County will also return its second-leading kill scorer from last year in Knight. Warner has seen Knight become a triple threat this year with her ability to combine consistency on defense with her offensive prowess.

“She’s a threat anywhere on the net, so we’re utilizing her in different ways across the net, but she also puts up a huge consistent block,” Warner said. “We’re definitely looking at her to be a defensive threat up there. Her IQ is one of the best things about Ella Knight. She is smart. She can place the ball, but she also has a killer swing that will get through any block.”

Knight put down 250 kills last year, second on the team. Most of the team has been playing together since the sixth grade, and Knight has noticed a bond that has formed off and on the court throughout the years. Knight has been focused on improving her all-around game this off-season.

“I feel like coming into this season, I really wanted to improve on a lot more than hitting, more blocking, more all around stuff,” Knight said. “This club season, I really worked towards that different positioning, different areas of strength that I had been weaker in during the previous season. I think it’s really important to keep going with that kind of thing and stay with it and stay confident and stay always getting better. I think moving into the season, it was just super helpful. I think it came with a lot of knowledge and a lot more things to know and things to tell everybody else, tell the younger kids.”

The Lady Colonels will also return one of their breakout stars from last year in sophomore Kayla DaSilva. DaSilva played in all 33 games and was fourth on the team with 160 kills and second on the team with 46 total blocks. Warner has seen her confidence grow since last year and her ability to want the ball and want to perfect her craft.

DaSilva has improved on her passing to aid her defensive efforts at the net, and Warner expects her to be a six-rotation player for the team. Knight has also noticed the same growth from DaSilva.

“She took a big jump from her club season until now,” Knight said. “She’s a huge part of our team and a huge role on our team. She’s a really great positive presence on the court, but she’s also obviously really



PHOTO BY Wyatt Sparkman

Oldham County senior Sydney Baker and junior Ella Knight block a shot in a 3-1 win over South Oldham.

great offensively and defensively. I think she’s grown our team a lot. I think she pushes our team very well, and I think she’s, honestly, come from just being a freshman and still being an underclassman to a really strong leader on our team and someone that a lot of people will look up to.”

Warner has noticed growth and development from Williams and sophomores Rylee Logsdon, Matthews and Popham. She is excited for the sophomore class and their development over the next few years.

At the net, Daniels, Bella, Knight and Warner have seen Ohlin, Rye and Logsdon step up as hitters on the team with seniors graduating in some of those hitter spots last year. They have noticed a lot of growth from them and other underclassmen this off-season.

“I think Ashley’s put a lot

more aggression into her swing, a lot more dominance on the court,” Knight said. “I think Maggie has gotten a lot better. She’s showing a lot more swings and a lot more kills and talent. I think she’s really stepped it up since last season as well. I think they’re two very powerful players that have really stepped up since last season.”

Warner is focused on making sure her team is ready to go come the post-season. She wants to set her team up for success and a long postseason run. She also wants to see her team get better by 1% each day.

“We hope that going into the district tournament, everybody wants that number one seed,” Warner said. “We love to have that going into the tournament since it is hosted at North this year. We’d love to be the number one seed going into it, but you have to win those

two games to get it. So right now, we’re working for those two games and never going to overlook them. They’re rival games. They’re fun. It’s a fun atmosphere. Obviously, we know a lot of kids on both teams. I think it means more to go do that. For us, it means we want to make it out of districts into that regional tournament, and we want to make a run. We always want it for the seniors, and we always want it for the ones that didn’t get there.”

Daniels wants to see the team also clinch a regional berth in the regular season and wants to see her team play with confidence against North Oldham.

“Beating North would be the best situation ever,” Daniels said. “I feel like going into the past few years, we’ve always been really nervous for that

game and scared. I feel like this team has such a fire under them to really want to beat North. I feel like this year we’ll have the confidence to do that.”

Going into the season, Bella wants to learn from each game and see steady growth throughout the year.

“I also think we should just learn from each game that we play until those big district games, because each week we have something to look at and to get better at,” Bella said. “At that North game, we should be at our best and have everything figured out, so that we are ready to play.”

Knight has seen a determined team this year, especially coming off a reverse sweep loss in the regional semis last year to Eminence. One of the team’s many goals this season is to get revenge on

Eminence and sweep the county this year and clinch a region tournament berth in the regular season.

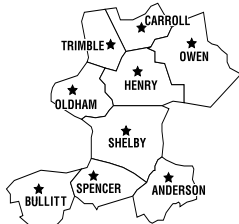
“I think we owe it to our seniors, and we owe it to ourselves and our younger selves too, to get back at [Eminence],” Knight said. “I definitely think we can, no problem there. I think a really big goal setting there is just be ready for that game and be ready to come in and take it back...I think something important too, goal-wise, is no game is a small game. No school is a small school. There’s plenty of schools that’ll come up behind you, and you’ll have no idea just like club. I feel like we just have to treat this season as if no game is a small game. You never know what’s going to come out of it. Every game you play your hardest.”

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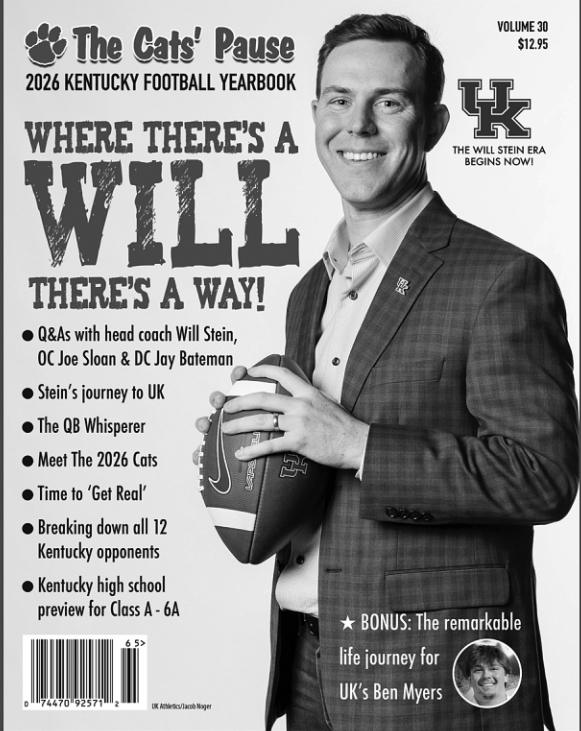


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