

Noah improves kills per second and hitting percentages for MEAC 2011-12 Champions



When University of Maryland Eastern Shore Coach Don Metil and his staff evaluated the 2011 women's volleyball team before the season, they thought a .500 record would be a good accomplishment. Although the Hawks were coming off a 20-12 campaign, Metil and his assistants thought setting would hinder the team.

UMES started slowly, posting a 2-5 record and was hovering at that .500 mark when the Noah System arrived at the Princess Anne, Md., school.

"There are two battles we try to win when we face tough competition—the serve/pass battle (ace to error ratio as well as limiting aces against us) and hitting efficiency," Metil said. "With the Noah System, we have been able to improve our hitting efficiency, which is a high indicator of wins and losses."

And championships.

After two weeks of setters and hitters working with the Noah System, the Hawks embarked on a magical 19-game winning streak that culminated with the school's first-ever Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC) women's volleyball championship.

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UMES' run spanned nine weeks and included a perfect 12-0 conference record. The Hawks then rallied twice during the MEAC Tournament and defeated Florida A&M, 3-2, to win the title. UMES faced UCLA in the NCAA Tournament and lost to the eventual national champions in the first round.

"How much impact did the Noah System have on our program?" Metil asked before answering. "We thought we would be around .500. We ended the season 24-7, which is a .774 winning percentage. If we expected .500 then Noah had nearly a quarter percent immediate impact. That's huge."

The statistic change from 2010 to 2011 is astounding. UMES improved its kills from 1,390 to 1,447 or 1.84 kills per set more. The Hawks hitting percentage rose from .218 to .248 and their assists went from 1,259 to 1,324.

Even during the season, Coach Metil saw a significant change in the team's setting statistics. Before Noah arrived, the team averaged 8.85 assists per set. After Noah's arrival, that stat jumped to 10.68 assists per set.

The Hawks ranked first in the conference in hitting percentage, opponent hitting percentage, assists, kills, blocks and second in service aces (fifth in the nation). First-Team All-MEAC setter Jessie Vicic led the league in assists with a 10.58 average. The freshman helped Ndidi Ibe (.326), Saitaua Iosia (.301) and Kaveinga Lea'Aetoa (.296) place first, fourth and fifth, respectively, among the conference's hitting percentage leaders.

"The Noah System did wonders for our setters," Metil said. "The players always wanted to use it in practice and during off periods to train on their own. They pushed themselves and each other and wanted to improve on Noah. They wanted to beat each other."

Metil added that in years past, he would talk about setting in open ended terms.

"We don't use that terminology anymore," Metil said. "It's much more exact. When we tell the setters that they are 'two or three degrees off,' they understand what adjustments to the set need to be made."

Not only did the setters improve, but also the Hawks hitters who routinely practiced with their setters on the Noah System.

"I think a secondary factor that was huge for us is that Noah brought together hitters and setters in more of a team format," Metil said. "During tutoring sessions, hitters were more eager to come in with our setters. Setters started to understand what degree different hitters liked the ball."



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For example, Metil cited, one hitter might like a fast tempo set at 43-45 degrees while another likes it at 46-48 degrees.

“We were athlete-specific with the Noah System,” Metil said. “We trained our hitters individually on Noah.”

With the Noah System serving as a pseudo coach, the UMES staff could concentrate on working on other fundamentals such as ball handling. The Hawks’ Ball Handling Errors (BHE) decreased in 2011 from 2010.

“That’s another important statistic for us,” Metil said. “Our decrease in BHEs means while the Noah System is assisting our setters in the end result of the set, meaning location, height or degree of entry, the coaching staff has been freed up to specifically train technique that has resulted in a decrease of BHEs and thus less ‘free’ unearned points we were giving our opponents.”

Coach Metil first encountered the Noah System on marketing materials distributed by the company. He also saw it in passing at an event but didn’t stop to check it out. Then he worked with the Noah System at a camp last summer and recognized its potential.

“I’m a math/science guy and the physics and technology behind it was intriguing,” Metil said.

He did some research, asked questions and even contacted Women’s Volleyball Coach Ben Briney of Truman State University, which has had plenty of success with the Noah System. Briney convinced Metil he needed a Noah System in his gym.

Soon Mike Buchanan, Noah regional representative, brought in a portable system and it wasn’t long before Metil was ordering a system.

“We had a one-day experience with Noah and the setters really bought into the system,” Metil said. “They fell in love with Noah. They really felt it could help them improve.”

Metil said he’ll incorporate Noah into summer camps and make it a huge part of what the Hawks do. He wants to use Noah to improve the speed of the team’s setters and thus jolt the transition game.

“We want faster sets in transition with efficient swings,” Metil said. “It’s going to be fun.”

