

Truman State Up 300 Kills with Noah

Ben Briney, Head Women's Volleyball Coach, Truman State University

"I believe in Noah 100% ... the numbers don't lie." -- Ben Briney

Ben Briney still had a few pressing questions after watching a couple of instructional videos by legendary Stanford women's volleyball coach John Dunning. So Briney decided, out of the blue, to e-mail the coach who has won four national titles.

"He was incredibly gracious," said Briney, head coach of women's volleyball at Truman State University, in Kirksville, Mo. "He took the time to answer all the questions I had."

Then during the summer of 2010, Briney contacted Dunning again. This time, Briney mentioned that he soon would be in Palo Alto, Calif., and asked if he could watch Dunning's practice.

The answer was a resounding yes.

"That's when I first came into contact with the Noah System," Briney said.

Briney became Truman's head coach prior to the 2009 season after serving as the Bulldogs top assistant from 2005-2008. The 2008 team featured six starting seniors and advanced to the National Semifinals.

When Briney took over in 2009, he wanted to do things different, even though the university had enjoyed a tremendous amount of success throughout the decade—national runners-up in 2002 and 2004, a National Quarterfinal appearance in 2005 and the National Semifinals in 2008.

"After my first year as head coach I was looking for a way to get more production out of our outside hitters. We needed to speed up the offense to play to the strengths of our hitters." Briney said.

Briney noticed the Noah System immediately when he attended Dunning's practice in late May 2010. He inquired about it and after listening to the explanation, Briney easily understood the science.

So Briney stationed himself behind the Noah System and started timing each set.

"We really wanted to speed up our offense," Briney said. "We wanted to post consistent times of 1 to 1.2 seconds from the moment it leaves the setter's hand to contact with the outsider hitter's hand."

What Briney discovered was Coach Dunning's team practiced that exact timing and nailed it on almost every set. The proof was there on his stopwatch.

"After watching practice, I knew Noah was the answer to help our setters consistently set the speed to the pin we were looking for." Briney said.

The Bulldogs unwrapped their new Noah System in July 2010. Briney said he had no problems setting it up on a side court.

"I was on the phone with John Carter (Noah CEO) and he walked me through it," Briney said. "It was easy."

Briney used it first in summer camps. Then when formal practices started, the team used it virtually every day. Briney stressed a 45-48 degree angle to outside hitters, the same trajectory that Coach Dunning used with the Stanford Cardinal team.

"We had our setters come in for their normal pre-practice setter training every day 15-30 minutes before practice," Truman assistant coach Megan Wargo said. "Then we would also have our right sides run through their reps with Noah while our other positions were doing other skill work."

The results were impressive. The Bulldogs produced nearly 300 more kills than the previous season and improved their hitting percentage by over 70 percentage



Ben Briney, Head Women's Volleyball Coach Truman State University

points. Truman State University also extended its consecutive weeks in the AVCA Top 25 poll to 153 and finished ranked No. 21 in the nation. The Bulldogs posted a 25-8 record and qualified for their 11th consecutive postseason appearance.

For a team that uses a 6-2 offense, good setting was a top priority.

"I believe in Noah 100 percent," Briney said. "The numbers don't lie. Our outside hitters and setters were the same as in 2009. The difference was the setters were much more consistent which allowed the hitters to produce that much more offensively."

Briney added that of the five Bulldogs that were named to the Mid-America Intercollegiate Athletic Association all-conference team, two were outside hitters and one was a setter. One outside hitter was even named National Player of the Week.

"Our athletes are truly student-athletes," Wargo said. "The setters loved getting the 'grade' from Noah and having something that could track their progress."

Briney wants to improve on how he used Noah from last season. He wants to try to make Noah viable as a backsetting tool and add the system into game scenarios. He said he'll spend the spring testing how it works with these two situations.

"I'm excited for our setters and right sides to use Noah this spring." Briney said. "Noah allows me to help our setters with their technique. I no longer have to worry about was the height correct, or was the location where it needs to be? Noah took care of that part for me. I can now focus on their form, their hands and footwork. Also, it has become a competition of who can be the most consistent, so I didn't need to push them to get better. They are pushing themselves."