

# Noah benefits both setters and hitters

*With Noah's help the Bears triple wins over the previous two seasons*



It was about a year ago when Coach Steve Pike attended the USA Volleyball High Performance Coaches Clinic at the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colo.

It was a trip that changed the fortunes of his SUNY Potsdam women's volleyball program for the 2011 season.

It was there that he watched a presentation by legendary volleyball coach John Dunning of Stanford. Dunning was showing how the Noah System could be used to increase the performance of setters and hitters. The speed of the offense really caught Pike's attention.

"I was blown away," Pike said. "I was really amazed that Noah could give an athlete instant and accurate feedback. I also really liked that you could set the location and height of each set. I'd never heard or seen of such technology before."

Pike also knew that if Coach Dunning endorsed such a system, that it was good enough for him.

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"My first thought after wanting to get one was that such technology would cost too much for our program," Pike said. "But when I learned it was affordable, I knew it was something we had to get."

Pike teamed up with the women's basketball program to purchase Noah, which arrived in the New York community a week before the preseason in August. Pike used the first few months to investigate Noah's possibilities and designed a practice routine for the system.

"I figured out that Noah worked very well with the right side of our offense," Pike said. "We were doing a lot of what Coach Dunning was teaching with Noah, 42 degrees sets to the outside. We also incorporated Noah in practicing our shoot sets."

Pike noticed one problem though.

"Our setters and I got really good at knowing the height of each set that when a hitter turned to a setter and said 'I need it higher,' we would say, 'no, that was 43 degrees and perfect,'" Pike said. "So I discovered that it was important that our hitters also worked with Noah."

Pike said getting his hitters involved in Noah earlier next season will be a priority. He added that hitters practicing with Noah allowed him to create the speed and height of sets better. Plus, the Bears practiced hitting lines with Noah and ran other hitting drills.

Noah helped the Bears as they tripled their win total from the previous two seasons. SUNY Potsdam finished 19-17 in 2011. They won six games in 2010 and six games in 2009.

"Absolutely, Noah had a lot to do with tripling our win total," Pike said. "I'm so excited to see what it will do for us in 2012."

The Bears kills jumped to 9.1 in 2011 compared to 8.7 in 2010. Also their attack percentage improved to .159 from .112.

One player who really benefitted from Noah was sophomore setter Jenna Blujus, who earned first team All-SUNYAC. Blujus recorded 889 assists, 66 serving aces and 373 digs. She also contributed 100 kills and 23 blocks. Her 7.06 assists-per-set ratio was ninth best in the conference. Compare those numbers from the previous year when Blujus led the team with just 403 assists for a 5.45 average.

"Noah helped Jenna play a lot faster," Pike said. "The tempo of our offense is faster than she's ever run it before. The range where she can set really improved. So she helped us run a faster offense from more places on the court than ever before."



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The sophomore set personal highs with 44 assists against Kean on Oct. 15, 20 digs against Geneseo on Oct. 29, and six aces against Medaille on Sept. 17. Blujus' play also earned her the Most Valuable Player award at the Oswego Invitational as she helped the Bears to the tournament title on Oct. 8.

Pike said the biggest factor in Blujus' rise was her confidence.

"You could really see her growing more confidence because she was getting accurate feedback from Noah and worked on correcting her mistakes," Pike said. "She knew she was getting better."

Pike said Blujus continues to work with Noah, coming into the gym on her own or with teammates, setting on the system and trying to run the offense even faster. He said the players are very competitive and Noah allows them to compete against each other.

"They celebrate when they get a personal best," Pike said. "Noah rewards them for improvement. And they can compare their improvement against each other."

Pike added that Noah has been like another coach for the program and has made him a better setting coach.

"I can't praise enough the feedback component of Noah," Pike said. "Improvement occurs when kids have consistent and instant feedback. Noah is the best tool I've seen to give that feedback."

The Potsdam coach said he would recommend Noah to any coach or program that wants to improve their offense and help their players be technically better and create a faster pace to their game.

"Noah might have been originally designed as a basketball shooting tool, but it definitely benefitted our offense" Pike said. "I know the number of volleyball programs that have improved with Noah is growing. I think every college should have one. In fact, every high school should have one as well."