UNH Women’s Club Volleyball Team Finishes Top 3 at Home Tournament

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The University of New Hampshire (UNH) women's club volleyball season is underway after a successful fall season where they finished third in the New England region. For these Wildcats this is the highest they’ve been ranked in years and are picking up where they last left off in the Hamel Recreation Center.

This Northeast Women's Volleyball Club League (NWVCL) team plays division one volleyball and last semester got a new coach, Jack Winship, a UNH men's volleyball alum. Winship helps make them stronger players, but the team itself is student-led and consists of 15 Wildcat women ranging from first-years to seniors.

There are three captains: senior Olivia Dill, senior Gwen West and junior Ellie Jordan. These three captains facilitate the fundraising, which helps support the team for nationals, and also deal with scheduling, transportation, making sure the team remains in good standing with the league and the logistics of the team.

Unlike UNH varsity sports, club teams must pay for everything. Dill mentioned there are tournament fees and league fees and they also have to pay for equipment each year. Alongside those expenses, when they qualify for nationals, it can cost up to an extra $10,000. The three captains alongside the 12 other women put a lot of time and effort into the team and it’s showing through their gameplay this season.
After competing in four tournaments in the fall around New England, they had three third-place finishes and one second-place finish. They currently qualify for regionals which hasn’t been done since 2015, another first in years for these Wildcats. Their first tournament of the spring semester took place in Springfield, Massachusetts on Feb. 4. They went 6-0 in pool play and were undefeated, finishing in first place to bring home the gold.

At the Hamel Recreation Center, they remained undefeated and went 3-0 in the first half of the tournament, beating Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU), UMass Lowell and the University of New England (UNE). Though they fought hard, the first game ended with a score of 24-26, and unfortunately, they lost their reign to Boston College (BC) going 0-2 then split 1-1 with Dartmouth and won against Merrimack 2-0. Their range of playing has secured them first place in the region.

“I think as a team we didn’t perform our best at this particular home tournament, but we still took home some wins which is always a positive,” said Dill when reflecting on Saturday’s tournament. “We have a team of girls who work very hard, and I would consider our wins earned by every girl on our team. So, what felt good was that every girl on our team played in those games and each contributed to the success. Some great all-around team wins!”

Dill expressed that what contributed to their success was their attitudes and making sure that everyone stayed 100% focused and put in 100% effort. Utilizing that and putting it into every point and cheer whether it be on the sideline or court.

“In the BC game in particular we had probably the highest level of drive and focus we’d had all day. We knew going into that game that we were going to be challenged, so we made sure we brought the energy,” said Dill. “The whole team was cheering loudly for every point. Energy is a huge part of volleyball, and it paid off. While we didn’t win, the first set was so close (24-26) we were right there with them.”

Dill explained that along with effort, attitude, communication and focus, confidence is key.

“While it might not have reflected in this tournament, I think throughout this season our confidence has improved. We go into every match with a drive to win and determination, rather than a fear of losing, especially to strong teams. We have a coach who makes sure we are doing our best every single point and pushes us to strive for those higher goals because we can absolutely achieve them with the right mindset,” said Dill.
Dill looks forward to the rest of her final season with the team and is very proud of the work the team has put in so far this year.

“We’re currently tied for second in the NWVCL, which is the highest rank we’ve had in years. Our win in Springfield two weeks ago was the first tournament win the program has had in at least eight years so we’re happy with those milestones, but we have even bigger goals for the rest of the season. We hope to place at nationals this year and hopefully come back with a win at our SNHU tournament on March 30.”