

# Underclassmen fill up varsity volleyball lineup

By Carlie Jo Fusco

After losing eight seniors last season, the Wildcat volleyball program is starting four of six underclassmen in this year's varsity lineup.

They include freshman Katelynn Toft, sophomore Avery Paper, sophomore Isabelle DeLong, and sophomore Layla Street-er.

The starting libero, Paper, finished the first 11 matches of the season with 69 digs as of the Mid-Prairie game on September 21.

Starting in the front row, Toft shares a rotation spot with Paper, two young teammates with a lot of potential.

"We both agree that we were meant for these spots and that it will work well throughout the season," said Toft.

With the varsity team being fairly young, it could bring the Wildcat program an advantage in future seasons. Getting more experience earlier lets the underclassmen understand how aggressive the varsity level plays.

Paper and Toft both agree that start-

ing varsity early is better now than later.

"It's a lot more competitive for varsity. It's a good learning experience and even more seasons in the future," said Toft.

Toft finished her first 11 matches of the season with 33 kills and 16 blocks as of the Mid-Prairie game on September 21.

Her being six foot two inches is a gift the Wildcat volleyball program has never had before, and Paper is nothing but excited to see Toft excel.

"It's out of the ordinary, and her being a freshman is a lot better for us since she's young, and it can help us in the future of our volleyball team," said Paper.

Toft has had her focus on starting varsity as a freshman for a while now.

"I play club [volleyball], I get a lot of reps, so I play a lot. I also try to be friendly with everyone, and I worked on my skills a lot," said Toft.

Her personal goals for this season are to help her team earn a winning record and to earn a high percentage of kills and blocks.

Paper said she also put in work



Photo by Dayna Maiers

Katelynn Toft celebrates a scored point with her team during the Northeast Goose Lake game.

during the off-season to get better.

"I felt like I put in the work towards it, and I earned my spot," said Paper. "I went to all the open gyms that I could make it to, and I put in all the effort I had."

Both players expressed that they're excited about being teammates this season.

"I feel like we've gotten closer throughout the year as it's started, and I've gotten to know her a lot better," said Paper.

## Summer renovations make sporting events more accessible

By Isabelle DeLong

Over the summer of 2021, the school renovated the gym and concession stand, which includes new disability-friendly bleachers and a new concession stand on the south side of the gym.

The district should be commended for making our athletic events more accessible and enjoyable for all of our fans.

The total price tag for the renovations came to almost \$169,000. That included \$80,000 for the concession stand and al-

most \$89,000 for the bleachers.

The concession stand was constructed by Sheets Design Build. The bleachers were installed by TownsEnd Co.

Sheets Design Build is out of Maquoketa and TownsEnd Co. is out of Urbandale.

The gym looks very nice with the new bleachers, year-old mats, and a new paint job.

Staff member Bobbi Regan painted a yellow stripe around the whole gym and blue bordering around the doors and on the balcony.

"The bleachers needed to be brought up to code with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliances," said Athletic Director Matt Straube.

"The bleachers had to have handicap accessible seating, which includes having handrails. On top of that, the old bleachers were falling apart in many places. It was just time for new bleachers."

The new bleachers include bigger walkways, handrails, and cutouts for people to sit with wheelchairs and scooters.

With the installment of those things, the bleachers will not have as much seating capacity.

"With the ADA Compliance Act, there is an extra row of walkway area on each side that takes away some seating, along with a couple of cutouts for wheelchairs and scooters," said Mr. Straube.

"Also on the away side, the bleachers have two less rows of seating. So there are definitely a couple hundred less spots for people to sit in the bleachers."

The new concession stand is on the south side of the gym in the high school commons.

"As far as the concession stand was concerned, the boosters had been looking at doing something with it, and with the bleachers getting fixed, it brought the perfect opportunity to do the concessions as well," said Mr. Straube.

The old concession stand was on the north side of the gym, but the new concession stand is very convenient because it keeps tickets sales and concessions on one side of the gym, which allows the middle school commons to be blocked off so just coaches and players can be there.

This will also help fix the problem with kids running around during sporting events.

"It will be interesting to see as we get going how traffic ends up being handled, when people are coming into games and in between games with people at the concessions. It might get crowded, so we'll have to figure out the logistics as we go," said Mr. Straube.

Seating a couple of hundred less people is a small sacrifice for getting our facilities updated, which makes our school more accessible, safe, and appealing.



Photo by Kylie Meyermann

New gym bleachers that were part of a renovation project over the summer cost almost \$89,000 and are rolled out ready for volleyball fans to take a seat.

### Wilton Cafe's football player of the month



116 W. Fourth St., Wilton, IA 52778  
563-732-4115

Sophomore Charlie Huesmann plays cornerback and quarterback for the Wildcats this year. He said, "Knowing that one day I could have my college paid for with an athletic scholarship and eventually being recognized as kind of a hometown hero helps me to stay motivated."



Huesmann

### Apex Ink and Apparel's volleyball player of the month



708 5th St., Durant, IA 52747  
563-785-6223

Freshman Katelynn Toft is playing middle hitter for the Wildcats this year. She wants to help her team achieve a winning season. She said, "I love the thrill of playing volleyball. There is nothing like the feeling of a great kill or a huge block."



Toft

### Iowa 80 Kitchen's cross country runner of the month



755 W. Iowa 80 Road, Walcott, IA 52773  
(563) 284-6512

Freshman Race Starr is one of two boys running varsity for the Wildcats this year. At his first meet, at the Schoolhouse Open in Clinton, he ran the 5K course in 24:20. He then ran 24:55 at the Tipton Cross Country Invitational.



Starr

Today's  
  
Dentistry  
502 9th Ave.  
Durant, IA 52747  
(563) 785-4541

### Today's Dentistry play of the month

Senior Drake Shelangoski takes the play of the month for the fall sports with his interception in the first game of the season against Sigourney-Keota at home. During the third quarter, he had an acrobatic catch on top of two Sigourney-Keota receivers. He said, "I saw the pass go up, and I knew that it was short thanks to a hit on the quarterback."



Shelangoski