

FIGHTING BEES Volleyball

For many high school boys' volleyball athletes, they have an appreciation for what they find at St. Ambrose. With so few college men's volleyball programs in the country, it hasn't been difficult for St. Ambrose University to field a team. High school hotbeds in Chicago and St. Louis have been tapped for talent.

"A lot of strong, solid high school athletes don't get the chance to play in college," head coach Bill Gleeson says. "They want to play, but are never offered the opportunity. But if you go out looking for that untapped talent, it's certainly there."

And while SAU's winning percentage isn't in the high double digits, season records aren't necessarily an accurate measuring stick of a program's excellence in the Mid-America Men's Volleyball Intercollegiate Conference.

"The conference we play in is one of the most competitive in the country," says Gleeson. "In the past seven years alone, half of the national champions have been teams that we go up against."

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Athletic success

A brand new men's volleyball program landed at St. Ambrose in 2000. Struggling to find its feet, an SAU team made up entirely of freshmen won four games that year, three the next. The 2002 season marked the first year the program fielded upperclassmen on the roster, and the team rallied for 15 wins. One season later, the Bees hosted and finished fifth in the Tachikara/NAIA National Tournament.

"Year after year, we consistently play the best teams in the country, always finishing with a respectable record above .500," Gleeson says. "No matter where we travel or who we welcome on the home court, we're competing with the best NCAA Division III and NAIA talent in the country."

The Bees have finished conference runner-up several times, and are still gunning to win their first crown. In fact, in 2005 the Bees were one win away from a conference championship and a second trip to nationals.

The conference

The conferences holding St. Ambrose's men's volleyball have varied in SAU's seven years as a program. Currently, SAU is a member of the Mid-American Men's Volleyball Intercollegiate Conference, which contains 10 colleges and is split into two divisions, East and West. While men's volleyball is no longer recognized as an NAIA sport, the NAIA and Tachikara USA each support and sponsor the National Men's Volleyball Invitational Tournament.

Mid-American Men's Volleyball Intercollegiate Conference, East

St. Ambrose University, Davenport, Iowa
Clarke College, Dubuque, Ia.
Cardinal Stritch University, Milwaukee, Wis.
Missouri Baptist College, St. Louis, Mo.
Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, Ill.

Recent records

2004 Overall 9-16; CCAC 6-4 (4th in CCAC)
2005 Overall 8-15; CCAC 3-3 (2nd in CCAC)
2006 Overall 9-23; MAMVIC 4-6 (4th in MAMVIC)
2007 Overall 17-12; MAMVIC 6-4 (3rd in MAMVIC)

2007 MAMVIC Regular Season

vs. Moody Bible W 3-0	at Moody Bible W 3-0
vs. Cardinal Stritch . . W 3-2	at Missouri Baptist . . L 3-0
at Missouri Baptist . . L 3-0	vs. Lindenwood L 3-2
vs. Lindenwood L 3-0	at Calumet W 3-1
at Moody Bible W 3-0	at Cardinal Stritch . . W 3-2

2007 MAMVIC Conference Tournament

vs. Moody Bible W 3-0
vs. Missouri Baptist . . L 3-0

The coaching staff

Bill Gleeson '05 began his coaching career last year when he served in multiple coaching roles for the Fighting Bees. In addition to assisting the men's varsity team, Gleeson led both the men's and women's JV squads, and will continue his work this year with the women's JV squad.

While a student, Gleeson was a four-year starter at SAU, progressing from an outside hitter to a right-side hitter. In 2003, he played in the NAIA National Tournament hosted at St. Ambrose and received tournament honors for the most digs per game. Selected as team captain in 2005, Gleeson is currently ranked second in career kills at SAU.

Academic success

While NAIA does not recognize academic excellence for men's volleyball athletes, members of the SAU men's volleyball team have consistently earned academic all-conference awards. In seven years as a program, St. Ambrose has always had at least two players receive an academic award—more than 20 in all.

Community service

Typically, the volleyball team will participate in 4–5 community service projects throughout the year. Projects include working with shelters for the less-fortunate and gift-giving programs with SAU's neighborhood schools.

Facilities

Built in 1983, Lee Lohman Arena on the St. Ambrose campus is the home of Fighting Bees volleyball. Lee Lohman has undergone a few recent renovations, the most noticeable being its comfortable stadium-style bleachers. All practices are held in Lee Lohman.

Financial aid

Partial scholarships are available and are based on a combination of financial need and volleyball skill.