

V-ball Lady Panthers say goodbye to some of their finest

By **Kate VanGerven**
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Nothing lasts forever, university volleyball included.

This year, UPEI women's volleyball says goodbye to three leading players.

A short and sweet ceremony was held Friday, Feb. 6 before their last game of the season where coach Lynn Boudreau and trainer presented small gifts to their three graduating players. Erin Kinsman, Lindsay Rodgerson and Rebecca Gallant have been with the team for the entirety of their time at UPEI and each has their own shining attributes that have helped to shape the team.

Erin Kinsman, a native of Charlottetown, plays middle for our Lady Panthers and was an AUS All-Star.

Lindsay Rodgerson hails from Summerside and has a number of credentials attached to her name. Playing libero for the Lady Panthers, she has been called "the heart of the Panther defence," and received the Pepsi Coach Award during her university career. Off the court, Rodgerson was also involved in UPEI Athletics as the co-chair of Student Athletics Council.

From Kensington comes Rebecca Gallant, an outside hitter in her fifth year at UPEI. Gallant has an impressive record of over 650 career kills and an even more impressive presence on the court.

Coach Boudreau and trainer say that Gallant "understands the sport and what it



Panthers get a round of applause as they say farewell to some of their most beloved players. The team has on their way a lot of talent, and a brand new coach. VanGerven photo

takes to succeed." A framed jersey with Gallant's No. 4 was presented in recognition of all that Gallant has given to the team in her five years at UPEI.

During the final game of the season, a strong sense of unity within the team was easy to spot.

Kinsman, Rodgerson and Gallant had a lot to do with this as they not only played to the best of their ability, but they also made sure to keep their teammates positive throughout the races to 25.

This feeling on the court was demonstrated subtly through the small acknowledgement of a good block, the encouragement to forget about a missed point and their quick huddles after each point was scored.

The three senior players did well to leave UPEI with

something to remember them by. Rodgerson and Kinsman saved more than their fair share of points, almost scraping the floor in their efforts to get the ball back into the air. Gallant too had a number of highlights throughout the game.

Which was the most impressive? Gallant, with a single spike shot on three Acadia women to an embarrassing position flat on the floor. Now that's a legacy.

But Feb. 6 wasn't just the last game for Kinsman, Rodgerson and Gallant. Lynn Boudreau has been with these girls every step of the way in her role as coach which she has held for the past eight seasons.

Unfortunately for UPEI women's volleyball, Boudreau has decided to step down from her coaching position in order to spend more

time with her family.

On a positive note, Boudreau is keeping her responsibilities in the athletics department, ensuring that she will always remain a part of the UPEI athletics scene.

So is all lost next year with the absence of a seasoned UPEI coach, Kinsman, Rodgerson and Gallant? Not quite.

The team has a number of strong second and third year players who will continue to add their skills to the mixing pot.

On top of that, there are a few very promising first years to keep an eye on.

Tomomi Sugeno is indisputably the player farthest from home. A setter from Japan, Sugeno appears very comfortable with both her position and her teammates. Friday, Feb. 6 saw a strong game out of Sugeno who

was consistently where she needed to be, providing perfect opportunities for her teammates.

Olivia Dolphin, another first year player plays the position of middle for the Lady Panthers and was also very consistent during the Friday night game.

She appeared to gain momentum with each game they played, finally making several impressive blocks and tips over the net to gain a few last minute points that UPEI needed to secure their 3-1 win.

These moments of play had Dolphin and the rest of her teammates beaming.

With the amount of talent tucked away in those spandex shorts, and a new coach who is sure to bring out the best in them the future of the UPEI Women's volleyball team appears bright.