

Senior Spiker

All Brown closing in on the end of great high school career at Grand Island

Viking Star:

Grand Island senior Al Brown, who will be playing Division 1 next year, is one of the reasons the Vikings continue to be one of the top volleyball teams in WNY. She has seen this year's Vikings clinch their second straight Niagara Frontier League title. She will play at the University of Maryland next year.

By Mike Meiler

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The Grand Island girls volleyball team has seen a lot of success during Al Brown's Career.

The senior has been on teams that have won Niagara Frontier League titles, played the top programs in Western New York and finished one or two wins away from a Section VI Championship.

Brown, who accepted a scholarship to the Division I University of Maryland as a junior has seen this year's Vikings clinch their second straight NFL title. The team is undefeated and Brown said she's looking forward to one more shot at sectionals.

"I have mixed emotions really," she said. "I'm excited to be going to college but I'm going to miss my team... I feel like this season is a lot more important to me because it's my last season. I want to do a little better.

"We've done a good job keeping our desire to win up. I think that's helped us a lot this year. We have 11 seniors. I think a lot of them are sad to leave but happy we're doing so well and have another chance at sectionals."

Brown was named First Team All-Western New York at the "5" spot, or outside hitter, for the Vikings last year, but coach John Head decided his

team would be better served if she moved into the middle of the court this year.

The switch allows Brown to use her athleticism to cover more of the court defensively and attack more of the net on offense.

"She was really working on her ball control," Head said. "That's probably the biggest part of her game to work on. The blocking and the hitting have always been there. We actually moved our offense so that she plays the back middle because that person has to cover most of the area and that person gets to hit out of that area. It puts a lot more on her shoulders."

"I like the middle back a lot more," added Brown. "It's a lot more fun. I feel like I get more chances at digs."

Head also said the added responsibility has allowed Brown to grow into more of a leader on the floor.

"This year she's really stepped up into helping her teammates become better players," he said. "She's really matured on and off the court. She wasn't as aware of the big picture as she is now, and she's started to realize her actions rub off on her teammates."

Grand Island has one final league game scheduled for this Friday before sectionals begin on October 25. Head said his team wants to win out to ensure they clinch a high seed in the playoffs.

"One of our big goals was to win the NFL title, and that's done," he said. "Now we want to get home-court advantage through the semifinals. We're probably there right now as long as we keep winning."