•Once a Minneota Viking star, Ashley Hennen will now coach against her hometown team at rival Dawson-Boyd

By Gayle VanVooren
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When Ashley (Hennen) Dahl thinks about her high school days, she thinks about the volleyball teams she played on.

Once a member of the State Champion Minneota Vikings, she'll now stand on the other side of the court as the head coach of Viking rival Dawson-Boyd.

As a college graduate and newly married, Dahl will take that love of volleyball to a new height when she coaches the Blackjacks.

Dahl started playing volleyball for Minneota when she came here as a freshman. Joe Sussenguth was the coach, and he led the team to the State Tournament that first year.

"I had Joe Sussenguth for a total of six years, playing for him in high school and at Ridgewater College in Willmar. He was so easy to work for. Everything I learned was from him," Hennen said.

The Minneota teams had good success under Sussenguth, taking second twice, a fifth and a fourth at the State level. "Volleyball IS my high school memory," said Dahl.

It has been a busy summer for the then single Hennen, who married Joel Dahl on May 22 and then passed her RN license in July. "We live on a farm east of Dawson," said Dahl, " and I work at the Madison Lutheran Home in Madison."

While husband, Joel, is a farmer, he also has a creative hobby which takes him to Keystone,

SD, with his brother most of the summer. “He does chain saw carving,” said Dahl, “so I’ve been driving out there all summer long to see him.”

But when Fall comes, Dahl will be home working on the farm, and his wife, Ashley, will be going from work to the Blackjack gym to work with the volleyball team.

“I met with the girls and their parents in May and gave them my expectations,” she said. “This is my first year of coaching and the girls are very excited about the season.”

The Blackjacks won only three games last season, and will be viewed as the “under dog” in a number of games. “But I feel like they are going to be a good little team,” she admitted.

The Blackjacks is a senior-laden team, nine seniors on board. “They are all very athletic,” Dahl admitted, “but they need a little direction.”

Some of that direction came at the hands of her old coach, Joe Sussenguth. “I had him come and do a camp for us for three days,” said Dahl.

Friend and teammate Hayley Hennen also held a setting camp for the team and that, too was successful. “We just went through all the basics and fundamentals,” she said.

“Teamwork in volleyball is a big thing,” said Dahl, “and this team has struggled with three different coaches in the past three years.”

She added, “I expect the first few games to be a little rough, but I think they have a lot of potential. I just know they can do well.”