

The game of volleyball runs through her veins.

Kris Hagaman, who was a stellar player at the high school and collegiate levels, has been giving back to the game that has brought her so many rewards. Hagaman was named Watauga High's new volleyball coach on Thursday.

She replaces Kim Pryor, who resigned on July 13 after nine successful seasons. And she inherits a volleyball program that has known nothing but success in its storied history.

In the last 17 years alone, under the guidance of Pryor and Lori Anderson (1994-2000), the WHS volleyball program has produced 347 wins, two second-place finishes in the state tournament and a Final Four appearance. But those numbers don't intimidate Hagaman.

"I'm a teacher, and a learner," she said. "I love teaching the game, and there's always new things to learn. This is a great opportunity. I've been coaching at the middle school and club level for 13 years, and it's exciting to reach the next level."

Hagaman, a native of Boca Raton, FL, played at Pope John Paul II High School before she accepted a volleyball scholarship to play at Appalachian State University. And during her four-year stay at ASU (1986-1990), she was a first-team All-Southern Conference performer in 1987 and she was named to the SoCon All-Tournament Team in 1989.

She also set a number of individual, season and career records as a member of the ASU volleyball program.

"I was blessed, no question about it," Hagaman said. "I love the game, and I love teaching it. I've coached many of the girls in this county (including Maddie Bakken and Nicole Tesh), and I've coached every girl on this year's varsity team except one (Brooke Rhoades).

"Sure I'm nervous, but I also feel comfortable with the situation because the majority of the girls in the program know me."

And Hagaman has also been a successful teacher in the class room. She's been named Teacher of the Year on two occasions---in 1994-95 at Cove Creek Elementary School and in 2008-09 in her current position at Vallie Crusis Elementary School. She has also coached middle-school volleyball for 13 years, and she has worked with the Appalachian Avalanche Volleyball Club for seven years.

And Hagaman, who inherits a very good team this fall, will also have the luxury to coach her daughters Bailey (a senior) and Channing (a sophomore).

"It's no big deal, really," she said. "It's great to have the chance of coaching them at this level, but my daughters know what I expect and how I coach. They're use to me, and so are a lot of girls I've worked with over the years.

"We have a very talented team this year, and we could go pretty far this season. But we have to work it."

WHS returns an excellent setter in Bailey Hagaman and a strong nucleus led by the likes of Anna Church, Skylar Hicks, Colby Combs and Hannah Stewart.

But despite all that talent, Hagaman is a stickler for fundamentals; she expects her teams to be fully prepared going into a match.

"Having a winning team is important," Hagaman said. "But I also want the girls to have fun. Kim (Pryor) did a great job, and now it's up to me to keep it going."

The Hagan era officially begins on Monday, August 2.