

Ginipro Rounds Out Volleyball Coaching Staff

Written by Ryan Bower

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Appalachian State University rounded out its volleyball coaching staff for the 2013 season, head coach Matt Ginipro announced on Wednesday.

The Mountaineers will welcome former Wake Forest associate head coach Chad Willis to the fold in the same capacity while Anna Wagner, a former Appalachian volleyball standout, will return to her alma mater as an assistant coach in May after completing the sand volleyball season at North Florida.

Willis comes to the High Country after spending eight seasons in nearby Winston-Salem where he served as an assistant coach for the Demon Deacons before being promoted to associate head coach last year. In addition, Willis served as the team's recruiting coordinator and assistant camp director.

"I've known Chad for a long time and call him a good friend," said Ginipro. "I first met him when he was a student assistant at James Madison and coached and recruited against him in the ACC while he was at Wake Forest.

During his time at Wake Forest, Willis was primarily responsible for coaching the setters and coordinating offensive systems and coached two all-ACC setters in Erin Borhart and Kelsey Jones. In addition, he was part of a staff that led the Demon Deacons to a school-record-tying 10 ACC wins in 2005.

"He has always been a hard-working assistant coach and I couldn't be happier to add him to my staff. He has a great mind for the game and for team dynamics," said Ginipro. "His personality on and off the court will be something our players, and recruits, will love and want to play for. I'm looking forward to having Chad, his wife Caroline and son Aidan join the App State Nation." Prior to his time at Wake Forest, Willis spent one season as an assistant coach at Southern Conference rival Elon, where he helped lead the Phoenix to a 19-14 record and coached second team all-SoCon setter Emily Hayes.

"I want to thank Matt for this wonderful opportunity to be a part of the App State family. After visiting campus, seeing the facilities and meeting the team, administration and support staff, I am excited to get to work," said Willis. "Matt has been a good friend and I've always admired his passion for the game and coaching. He's set a clear vision for the future of the program and I look forward to being a part of it's continued success. My family and I are thrilled about being in Boone and calling App Nation our home."

Willis has also served as the head coach for women's club volleyball at James Madison while spending two seasons as a student assistant coach for the Dukes varsity women's program, where he was part of a staff that led JMU to a Colonial Athletic Association title and NCAA Tournament appearance in 2000.

A 2005 graduate of James Madison, Willis was the starting setter for JMU's men's club volleyball team where he helped lead his squad to three top-10 finishes at the national tournament while earning All-America honors twice.

Wagner will return to Appalachian State after spending one year at North Florida, where she is currently pursuing her master's degree in athletic administration.

She will also play sand volleyball for the Ospreys this season, taking advantage of the NCAA

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rule allowing student-athletes to play a different sport for one season after exhausting eligibility in another sport.

As a senior for the Mountaineers, Wagner led the squad in kills (405) and was second in digs (349) while posting at least 10 kills in 29 matches, including a career-high 31 in a win over NC State to open the 2011 season.

"It is a special day when you can bring one of your former Mountaineers back to join your staff, especially a player like Anna," said Ginipro. "Anna was a terrific player for us and I've always known she would make a great coach one day."

During her final season in Boone, Wagner finished fourth in the SoCon in kills per set (3.35) and earned second team all-SoCon honors as well as academic all-SoCon honors for the second-straight season.

"I am beyond excited to begin my coaching career at Appalachian State," said Wagner.

"Returning to my alma mater, a competitive conference I know and have experienced, and most importantly my Appalachian family, is such a great opportunity that I'm absolutely ecstatic about. I am really looking forward to transferring my passion and love for the game into my coaching career and can't imagine a better place to start."

Prior to her previous stint in the High Country, Wagner spent one season at Florida Gulf Coast where she started in 24 matches for the Eagles. As a freshman, she played at Iowa Western and helped lead her team to a fourth-place finish at the 2008 NJCAA national tournament.

"Her passion for the game is unparalleled and she immediately jumped at the chance to return to Appalachian State when I first spoke to her about it," said Ginipro. "I'm looking forward to working with Anna as a colleague and know she'll have an immediate positive impact on our program."

The Mountaineers return nearly the entire roster from last year's squad after losing just one senior to graduation and hauled in another strong recruiting class that includes three prep standouts.

Photo Courtesy: Matt Ginipro, ASU Athletics