

Combs Signs With Bluefield

Written by Mike Kelly

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Colby Combs made it official on Thursday by signing her National Letter of Intent to play volleyball at Bluefield College, an NAIA school in Bluefield, Va., this coming fall. And Combs, who was named the Northwestern 3A/4A Conference Offensive Player of the Year, is considered a huge pick up for head coach Brian Votaw, who

hopes to turn his program's fortunes around.

"She has the arm strength and she can jump," he said. "Put those two together and you've got a great player on the floor. I have no doubt in my mind that she can step right in and play next season. I've been hired to build a winning program, and I'm looking to sign eight or nine good players that I can place my foundation on. And Colby fits right into those plans. She's going to start for me next season."

And Votaw didn't waste any time making sure he could land Combs. He found her on a recruiting sight (BeRecruited.com), and he came to see her play a couple of times. And he wasn't disappointed with what he saw

"I was sold on her right away," he said. "I said, 'I've got to have her.' Her arm swing is outstanding, she can jump, and she's very athletic. You can't teach the arm swing and the vertical. She's blessed with those talents all ready. And that's a good thing. Now, we can work on some minimal things, but she has a lot of talent. And she can pound the ball. She'll see bigger players, of course, but she has the talent to compete at this level."

And WHS coach Kris Hagaman, who played at Appalachian State University and is in her second season as coach of the Pioneers, says Combs has been rewarded for all her hard work. "I've been associated with Colby since the second grade," she said. "I thought her at Cove Creek school, and I've coached her in club ball and at the high school level. She's an outstanding person, and an outstanding player. I am so happy for her. It's a great moment for her and our program."

And Combs, who led the Pioneers to their first regional final in 11 years, closed out her prep career on a strong note with 12 kills in a 3-1 loss against Providence.

"I'm very happy with my choice," Combs said. "I wanted to go to a small school. Coach Hagaman told me that coach Votaw wanted to speak with me. We've spoken a lot and I really enjoyed my visit to the school. I really love the girls I'll be playing with next year. It's exciting, and to have someone I can trust (Anna Church) going with me helps a lot."

Church will sign with Bluefield next Tuesday, November 8. And Votaw hopes he can build a possible pipeline of talent in this area.

"The Watauga volleyball team is well coached," he said. "They are fundamentally sound, they've got a strong program. It's a blessing to land two players from a program like this. I've very thankful this all worked out."

And Hagaman admits losing Combs is a bittersweet experience.

"Colby wanted to stay close to home," Hagaman said. "Bluefield is only two hours away. It's tough going away for the first time, but she'll adjust. She's joining a new family. And from a personal experience, she'll have people helping her out to get adjusted in her new surroundings. Colby will be just fine."

And so will the Rams.

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