

Volleyball verdict

Region powers Lake, Creek look strong again

By TED DUNNAM
tdunnam@hcnonline.com

Chanda Eager isn't one to live off past glories.

That's why the Clear Lake volleyball coach modestly expresses what her team can accomplish this year coming off a 34-11 campaign and a spot in the Region III-5A championship last year against Cy-Woods.

"We have the tools we need to go further," Eager said, "but it all boils down to the girls just doing it.

"They have to have the drive, make the plays and take advantage of our opportunities. Our region is very tough. I think Cy-Woods is still pretty much intact - they may have lost just one or two players."

However, the Lady Falcons must first survive the rigors of District 24-5A.

Lake and Clear Creek tied for the district crown last year with 13-1 records, but because the Lady Falcons won more games in the two head-

to-head meetings, they were afforded the No. 1 playoff seed.

Both squads advanced to the Region III-5A tournament.

"The experience we gained last year was critical," Eager said. "We finally made it over the hump after we had lost in the regional quarterfinals three or four years. When we beat Deer Park after being down two games to none...that showed a lot of heart and compassion.

"But this is a new season, and we're starting all over again."

The Lady Falcons are led by middle blocker Kiara Wright, a USC commitment. Other key returnees include outside hitter Kristen Pickett, defensive specialist Brinley Williams, outside hitter Haley Satterwhite and middle blocker Sarah Strasner.

"We need some consistent firepower on the outside," Eager said. "Sarah came up and did a good job in the playoffs, but we'll need consistency

from the outside slot all year.

"We feel like we've got players from the junior varsity who are very capable, but they have to prove it."

If there's an immediate roadblock for the Lady Falcons, it may well be crosstown rival Clear Creek.

The Lady Wildcats posted a 32-13 record last year, shared the 24-5A crown and advanced to the Region III-5A semifinals.

"We have pretty high expectations," head coach Scott Simonds said. "We want to win district and to get back to state where we were in 2008.

"We got pretty close to that last year, losing to the team that went to the state tournament, so we're just hoping to do a little better."

Creek ousted district cohort Pearland in the regional quarters before falling to Cy-Woods in the semis in four games.

Key returnees for the Creek include senior libero Natalie Piznar, junior setter Court-



WRIGHT

ney Richardson and junior outside hitter Ashley Smith.

Other key contributions could come from Kaela Ibrahim, Valen Custer, Bailey Robertson, Ariel Froeschl and Courtney Childers.

"I definitely feel this is the strongest district in the Houston area in volleyball," Simonds said. "All four playoff teams won a playoff game last year, and two of us made it to the regional tournament.

"Clear Lake and Pearland have a lot back and Clear Brook is going to be strong as well. We've got a tough



WILLIAMS

schedule, but I like to schedule it as tough as I can to get us ready for district."

Clear Brook defeated Fort Bend Austin in its playoff opener last year before falling to Deer Park in three games in an area-round matchup.

Among the Lady Wolverines' returnees are outside hitters Darian Lockwood, Anita Permenter and Crystal Young.

Clear Springs will be led by senior outside hitter Carley McCarra and middle blocker Taylor Zinke.

Other key contributors for



STRASNER

the Lady Chargers could be defensive specialists Desstin Allcorn and Katy Alper along with setter Sarah Rosinke.

Although the outlook is promising for all the CCISD schools, Eager says nothing can be taken for granted.

"You have to be ready to play every single night," the Lady Falcon head coach said. "Alvin, Brazoswood, Dickinson...any of these teams can beat you. I think we're definitely motivated to go farther than last year, but our work is cut out for us."