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TRINITY - Trinity High School has steadily built its volleyball program over the years, but with standouts Southwestern Randolph, Randleman, Uwharrie Charter and Wheatmore during its hey-day, often in the same conference, a league title has been elusive.

Even when Trinity joined the new Central Carolina Conference in 2025, teams like West Davidson and Providence Grove were still major hurdles to climb if the Bulldogs were to accomplish a league championship, something that hasn't been achieved since 1996.

But that long drought should certainly come to an end this season as THS needs just one more league win - they are scheduled to play West Davidson Tuesday and Wheatmore on Thursday - to clinch at least a share of the CCC regular-season title. A win over WD on Tuesday would earn the Bulldogs sole possession of first place and a pair of wins this week would solidify the first unbeaten conference season since anyone can remember.

"I just got cold chills and the sweats," THS coach Kathryn Vaden said when told it's been 30 years since THS captured a league title. "It gives me chills because the girls have worked so

hard. One of their goals was the conference championship because we knew it hadn't been done for so long, just didn't know how long. I don't think there are words to express it."

It's not as if the Bulldogs, who are 17-3 and 8-0 in CCC action, had been struggling overall as the team went 14-13 last season after two straight years of finishing 17-9. But the conferences the Bulldogs have been a part of have featured incredible volleyball programs. Now the Bulldogs are vying for that type of recognition.

"It's really a multiple of things," Vaden said of this year's success, which has featured wins over McMichael, Mount Airy, Central Davidson, Asheboro, Randleman and Providence Grove. "Not only have they been playing together since the seventh grade, I started coaching this group in middle school



Trinity volleyball coach Kathryn Vaden. Photo provided.



Senior Mya Hooker. Player photos by Just A Dad Photography.

and as they have grown, I have grown in coaching them. There is a lot of mutual respect for each other."



Senior Hayli Cox.

The Bulldogs have played a tough nonleague schedule to get ready for CCC play. After finishing second to West Davidson last year - the highest finish they had in a conference since 2013 when that team also finished second - and recording a first-round state tournament playoff win over Owen, the Bulldogs held a meeting prior to the start of this campaign.

"We had a full (discussion) of what we wanted to accomplish this year and I think that really got us off on the right path," Vaden said. "We came to

understand the team's goals and each individual's goals and what each person could do to help us reach those goals. This is a very special group that loves each other and they hold each other accountable."

Trinity opened this season with 11 wins in their first 12 matches with the lone blemish a 3-1 loss to Southwestern Randolph. The only other losses this season have been five-set setbacks to Randleman and Asheboro.

The Bulldogs have had a total of six five-set matches, winning four of them.

"After we beat Owen in the first round last year, I think some of our girls started to regret some of the season," Vaden said. "We should have done this earlier, we should have done that earlier. Should of, could of, would of. They don't want to walk away with any regrets."

The Bulldogs have a wealth of players enjoying incredible campaigns. Seniors Mya Hooker and Ari Pinkston along with junior Dakota Odell have recorded 181, 176 and 171 kills respectively heading into action this week. Senior Hayli Cox has added 160 and freshman Addison McCoy has added 132.

Pinkston has recorded 62 blocks.

Senior setter Avalynn Johnson has continued an incredible career that has seen her register 2,866 assists and is averaging 8.4 assists per set this season. She's done this while missing time after sustaining a concussion.

The NCHSAA record for assists in a career is Marvin Ridge's Adriana Jordan with 4,010 (2015-18) with the Randolph County record held by Providence Grove's Lia Johnson with



Senior Avalynn Johnson.

3,296. Those records may be out of reach, but a goal of 3,000 career assists is still possible, a number registered by very few setters in NCHSAA history.



Senior Ari Pinkston (8) and junior Dakota Odell (8).

In CCC play heading into the week, the Bulldogs have used contributions from players such as Cadence Mortensen, Charlee Phillips and Bryn Holden, to go 24-4 in sets won, giving up two sets to PG in two wins and two sets to East Davidson in two wins. Vaden said all 13 girls on the roster have contributed to the Bulldogs' success and she is proud of the growth everyone has had this season.

"Even when we were dropping sets to East Davidson and Providence Grove, those are the sets we are growing most in," Vaden said. "It was still a win, but we're asking questions like what were the

decisions we made? Why didn't we start faster? Why did we take our foot off the pedal when we had a lead? This team wants to continue to improve."

And earn a conference championship for the first time in 30 years.