

BETHEL VOLLEYBALL ANNOUNCING INCOMING FRESHMAN CLASS

MISHAWAKA – Bethel University Women's Volleyball Head Coach Katie Weiss is pleased to announce the signings of five student-athletes to national letters of intent for the 2020 class.

"This 2020 recruiting class is one of the strongest I've ever seen," stated Weiss. "Each player brings talent, strength, and team culture with them. As a whole they will add depth, energy, and consistency to our roster. Each player meshes well with our philosophies, character, and faith. They won't just fit right in, they will help define who we are and help us become who we want to be."

Jackie Fernandez hails from Elkhart, Indiana and prepped at Elkhart Memorial High School. Jackie is a 5-2 defensive specialist and libero. She is the daughter of Antonio Flores and Karina Gomez and plans on studying Business Management at Bethel.

"I've been interested in Bethel University since my middle school days," stated Fernandez. "I had two visits and really felt like home. It's close to home and I love the chemistry the volleyball team has and the great coaches!"

Fernandez was named a 2019 Under Armour All-American. She recorded Team MVP and has the fourth-most digs in a single season at Elkhart Memorial, with 517 as a senior and was a First Team All-NLC honoree. Over her career, she tallied 744 digs and 61 service aces. As a member of the NIVA club team, Fernandez helped the club to a USAV National Championship in the summer of 2019. Off the court, she was in the Academic Honors program throughout high school.

"Jackie raises the bar on each team I've seen her play on," said Weiss. "She leads the court well as a libero and has experience playing multiple defensive systems. Jackie's knowledge of the game makes her a huge threat on the court. She also has the fast and reactive play that we want to see in our defensive players. Jackie will bring consistency and improve our offensive tempo. Jackie knows how to play hard and push her teammates to be their best. She will make a great addition to the Pilots."

Caroline Mullet hails from Nappanee, Indiana and prepped at NorthWood High School. Caroline is a 5-7 setter. She is the daughter of Rod and Terrie Mullet and plans on studying Exercise Science at Bethel.

"I chose Bethel because I loved the atmosphere of the campus and everyone was so nice and welcoming," said Mullet.

Mullet earned IHSVCA Second Team All-State honors as a senior. She totaled 992 assists, 344 digs, and 121 kills in her final year. For her career, she tallied 1,873 assists, 552 digs, and 220 kills. She was named to the First Team All-NLC and Second Team All-District. Mullet helped the Panthers to an NLC championship and Sectional title. Off the court, she was a four-year scholar athlete and a member of the National Honor Society.

"Caroline has the drive and determination to be a record-setting collegiate player," described Weiss. "Caroline has only improved over the last few club seasons and she will continue to grow as a setter. She is a gritty, never-give-up kind of athlete. Caroline has the most consistent attitude I've ever seen. She is always ready for a battle and gives her hitters confidence to swing. She makes big plays and rarely gets the credit. Caroline is a strong addition to the 2020 class."

Maddy Payne hails from Nappanee, Indiana and prepped at NorthWood High School. Maddy is a 6-1 middle hitter. She is the daughter of John and Dawn Payne and plans on studying Nursing at Bethel.

"I was deciding between schools and through praying and talking it out with my parents Bethel was where God was telling me he wants me to be at," said Payne.

Payne finished her career with 917 kills, 283 blocks, and a .399 hitting percentage. She helped the Panthers to 2017 and 2019 conference championships and a 2019 Sectional title. She was a four-time First Team All-NLC honoree, a three-year captain, and was named to the IHSVCA Junior All-State team. As a senior, she was named IHSVCA First Team All-State and was an IHSVCA North-South Senior All-Star.

A three-sport prep star, Payne also won a state title with the NorthWood girls' basketball team, averaging 13.0 points and 6.0 rebounds as a senior and was named the Goshen News Prep Girls Basketball Player of the Year. She was honored with the Patricia L. Roy Mental Attitude Award, as well as earning All-State Honorable Mention. Off the court, she was a four-year Scholar Athlete and earned a 3.90 GPA. She was a two-time Academic All-State Honorable Mention.

"Maddy is an incredible athlete. Not only did she rack up impressive stats during her high school career, she also won a state title in basketball and received the IHSA Mental Attitude Award," explained Weiss. "Maddy's attitude matches—if not surpasses—her ability on the court. She is a team player, she brings strong team culture, and I know she is going to make a great leader for the Pilots."

Cheyenne Seymour hails from LaPorte, Indiana and prepped at LaPorte High School. Cheyanne is a 5-10 outside hitter. She is the daughter of Suzie Seymour and plans on studying Kinesiology at Bethel.

"I chose Bethel University because when I visited it felt like home," said Seymour.

Seymour recorded 594 kills, 379 digs, and 102 service aces over her high school career. As a senior at LaPorte, she recorded 194 kills and 186 digs in 98 sets played and earned honorable Mention All-Post Tribune honors. As a freshman at Victory Christian Academy, Seymour helped her team to a 2016 NCSAA Championship and earned the Coaches' Award. At LaPorte, Seymour helped the Slicers to an undefeated DAC Championship in 2018 and a Sectional Title in 2019. She was also named a 2019 AAU Junior National Volleyball Championship All-Star.

"Cheyanne brings power and energy to the 2020 class," praised Weiss. "She has an impressive vertical and finish and will make big plays for the Pilots. Cheyanne is constantly improving as a 6-rotation player. She is a threat at the net and out of the back row. I'm excited to see what she will bring to the Pilots."

Caitlin Zlabek hails from Onalaska, Wisconsin and prepped at Onalaska High School. Caitlin is a 5-9 setter. She is the daughter of Jon and Michelle Zlabek and plans on studying Nursing at Bethel.

"Bethel is 6 hours away from my hometown, so initially, it wasn't at the top of my list of schools," explained Zlabek. "I remember Coach Weiss recommending that I do an overnight visit so I could get the full experience. After my first night on campus, I knew Bethel was where I was supposed to be. The culture of the volleyball team and the friendliness of everyone I met blew away my expectations! I felt how much this university is like a big Christ-centered family, and in just one day I couldn't wait to be a part of it! Since making the commitment to attend and play for Bethel, the confidence in my decision

has only grown stronger."

Zlabek totaled 398 assists, 64 service aces, and 113 digs over 96 sets played as a senior. For her career, she tallied 668 assists, 103 service aces, and 198 digs. She was named All-Conference Honorable Mention and led the Mississippi Valley Conference in serve percentage. She earned the team's Most Consistent Award.

Off the court, Zlabek was a member of the National Honor Society, and earned honors for Academic All-Conference and a President's Outstanding Academic Achievement award. She was an honor roll student throughout high school and was a Student of the Month and trumpet section leader.

"Caitlin will bring discipline, and consistency to the 2020 team," stated Weiss. "She is a hard worker who is determined to become the best athlete and version of herself. She has experience running both a 5-1 and 6-2 offense and has a high game IQ. Caitlin has a powerful serve with over 103 aces during her high school experience. I'm excited to add Caitlin to the 2020 roster and I expect great things from her."