

ALERT SPOTLIGHT TOPICAL

Elkhorn North volleyball isn't easing into Class A, starting at No. 2

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“Same goal, new stage.”

It's Elkhorn North volleyball's motto this year as the 2025 Class B state runner-up moves up to Class A.

But moving up a class doesn't worry the Wolves. They earned the No. 2 spot in the preseason rankings after proving themselves with an intense schedule last season. They beat Class A champion Papillion-La Vista South twice, Omaha Westside twice, Omaha Marian and Millard South, all teams that finished in the top five in Class A in the end-of-season rankings.

“We feel fortunate that we've had such a competitive conference and class, just to help prepare us,” coach Jenny Gragert said. “We're going to have a lot of the top eight schools really coming after us. Like, ‘OK, welcome to Class A. Are you ready?’”

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Returning is last year's Nebraska kills leader, senior outside hitter Reagan Wallraff, who had 692 kills. She'll be joined by junior middle Payton Palmer, last year's team leader in blocks (65) and aces (53).

Rounding out the core are sophomore middle Emma Nadgwick, senior right side Kaitlyn Huff, junior outside Nora Morgan and junior libero Reese Wallraff.

"Staying focused on our own side and doing all the little things and making sure we're keeping the energy on our side, I think it allows us to play our best volleyball," Palmer said. "We know we have the skills to beat teams, but we also have to keep putting in the work at practice and digging deep. Just because you beat a team twice doesn't mean you'll beat them again."

Elkhorn North graduated star setter Hayden Booth, whom Gragert called the quarterback of the team. Millie Mauch, sister of Husker libero Olivia Mauch, is a possible starting setter. She'll compete for the spot with sophomore Remington Christiansen.

"We only lost three seniors this year, and one of them is our setter, Hayden. I think that losing her will be hard, but I think that we do have two really good setters coming in," Reagan Wallraff said. "I'm so excited for Class A. I think it'll be so fun, having the same momentum as we did last year."

The Wolves will start the year with a 6-2 rotation, with the possibility of moving to a 5-1. Keep an eye on possible six-rotation outside hitter freshman Ashtyn Liebsack. Her sister, Hayden, was a leading outside hitter for Bennington.

"We are a team that is gritty on defense, and our ability to extend plays is going to be really important this year," Gragert said. "The overall feeling that I get when I'm with this team is the amount of love, trust and respect they have for each other."

That chemistry is built through pregame dance parties in the locker room (“A Million Dreams” was their big song last season) and cheering for each other on and off the court.

“When (new teammates) get a good ball, cheering them on, it builds their confidence, and then they just know that we are all trusting them,” Palmer said. “We all believe that they have the skill to be where they’re at.”

Elkhorn North will play its first game of the season Tuesday at Millard West.

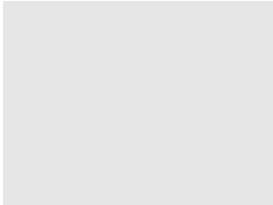
Rankings

Lincoln North Star is the top-ranked Class A team, coming off a 32-5 season. Senior setter Alex Kroll is back. She was sixth in the state in assists last season (1,081) and first in Class A. Senior outside hitter Delainey Volkmer also returns, and the Navigators have a strong libero in junior Marie Paneitz. They’re losing middle hitter KJ Pinchon, but senior Lauren McKernan will fill the role after recording 58 blocks to Pinchon’s 59 last season. If they can put the pieces together, they’ll be the team to beat in Class A.

Norris sits atop Class B and the overall rankings. Outside hitter Alli Bornschlegl, setter Malorie Boesiger and defensive specialist Kaelynn Lottman make a formidable trio that should be tough to get past. The Titans are a must-see team this year, with Boesiger committed to Nebraska next season.

Milford is No. 1 in Class C-1, with one of the top players in the state in middle blocker Shayla Rautenberg. She’s just a junior, and she’s already committed to Nebraska and has two Team USA gold medals from the 2026 NORCECA Women’s U19 Continental Championship and the 2025 NORCECA Girls U19 Pan American Cup.

Laurel-Concord-Coleridge should be impressive in C-2, and Amherst should continue to dominate D-1. Overton slides over from D-1 to D-2 after making it to the D-1 final last season.



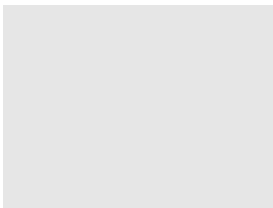
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Underdogs

Bennington moves up to Class A this year after a 24-10 season. The Badgers have the potential to be in the mix, but there's a lot of depth in the class.

Superior had a tough last season, finishing 3-26. But in 2024, the Wildcats were the Class D-1 champions. With star senior outside hitter Reagan Meyers working to get back to full strength this season after missing all of 2025 with an ACL injury, the Wildcats might just surprise everyone in C-2 this year.



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