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Cancer survivor to UNO volleyball standout, Faith Venable keeps pushing forward

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When Faith Venable was 10 months old, doctors found a Wilms tumor on her kidney. Removing the cancer left her with one kidney, and challenges she has never known a life without.

“There’s certain medicines or supplements that I can’t take,” UNO’s sophomore outside hitter said. “My mom has always made sure that I stay super duper hydrated. Like, I always have a Powerade, always have water with me. Just being cautious of something some other people don’t even think about, and just thinking about what I’ve overcome, that I’m here for a reason, and I’m really grateful for that.”

She began playing volleyball at 5 and went on to star at Lincoln Pius X. Though she played basketball, track and soccer, nothing compared to volleyball.

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When it came time to pick a college, she wanted to stay close to home. UNO felt like the right fit.

“Family and community are really important to me, and everyone here is super close, including the staff,” Venable said. “Everyone here just wants the best for you and really values relationships, and that’s something I value, too.”

Venable made the Summit League’s all-freshman team in 2025, leading the Mavericks with 45 aces — third overall in the conference — and finishing second in kills (284) and digs (205).

“The Summit League, there were a ton of freshmen I know this past year who were really good,” Venable said. “So to even be in that super small group, I know my hard work paid off, but I felt extremely blessed to see that other people could see how much work I put in this past season.”

Still, Venable said she didn’t play to her full potential because of injuries and adjustments to college.

“I’m glad that I’m not a freshman anymore, and I know what’s going on, so I’m a lot more comfortable just on the court and with the girls,” Venable said. “My mindset has developed and become more mature.”

Venable has shown her versatility, too, switching to outside hitter last season after playing middle blocker throughout high school. And despite injuries that forced her to miss practice, she was one of two Mavs to start all 26 matches.

“She’s talented, and talent is always something we want on the floor,” coach Matt Buttermore said. “She’s also someone that comes into the gym ready to work every day, and so there were very few moments we were like, ‘Is Faith with us this week? Is she distracted by other things?’ We always knew we got 100% of what she had available.”

UNO finished 10-16 — 7-9 in the Summit — last season, with four losses coming in five sets. One of Buttermore's challenges this year is to turn those five-set setbacks into wins.

"We didn't dominate the serve-and-pass battle like we're used to dominating in past years," Buttermore said. "We've got to learn how to win together. We might be better at a few things volleyball skillwise this year, and we have a lot of different people in some different spots on the court. We've got the on-court chemistry going."

The Mavs have six newcomers on their 14-player roster.

Freshmen include outside hitter/right side Cora Metcalf, middle blocker Dara Obeid and libero Kate Schroetlin. Buttermore said Schroetlin, one of the top recruits in Colorado, is a leader who will change the defense.

Outside hitter Madi Corf transferred from San Diego State, and setter Maddie Stuesser came from Charlotte. Stuesser is a six-rotation player who Buttermore said is good at locating the volleyball. Outside hitter Hayden Hart, who played at Millard West, returns home from Oral Roberts.

"A lot of new ball-control players in our gym this year between first and second contact, so passers and our setters," Buttermore said. "We're still figuring out how everybody fits together. We have a really competitive defensive specialist group, pretty competitive middle group, and some good transfers that are coming in and will make a difference right away."

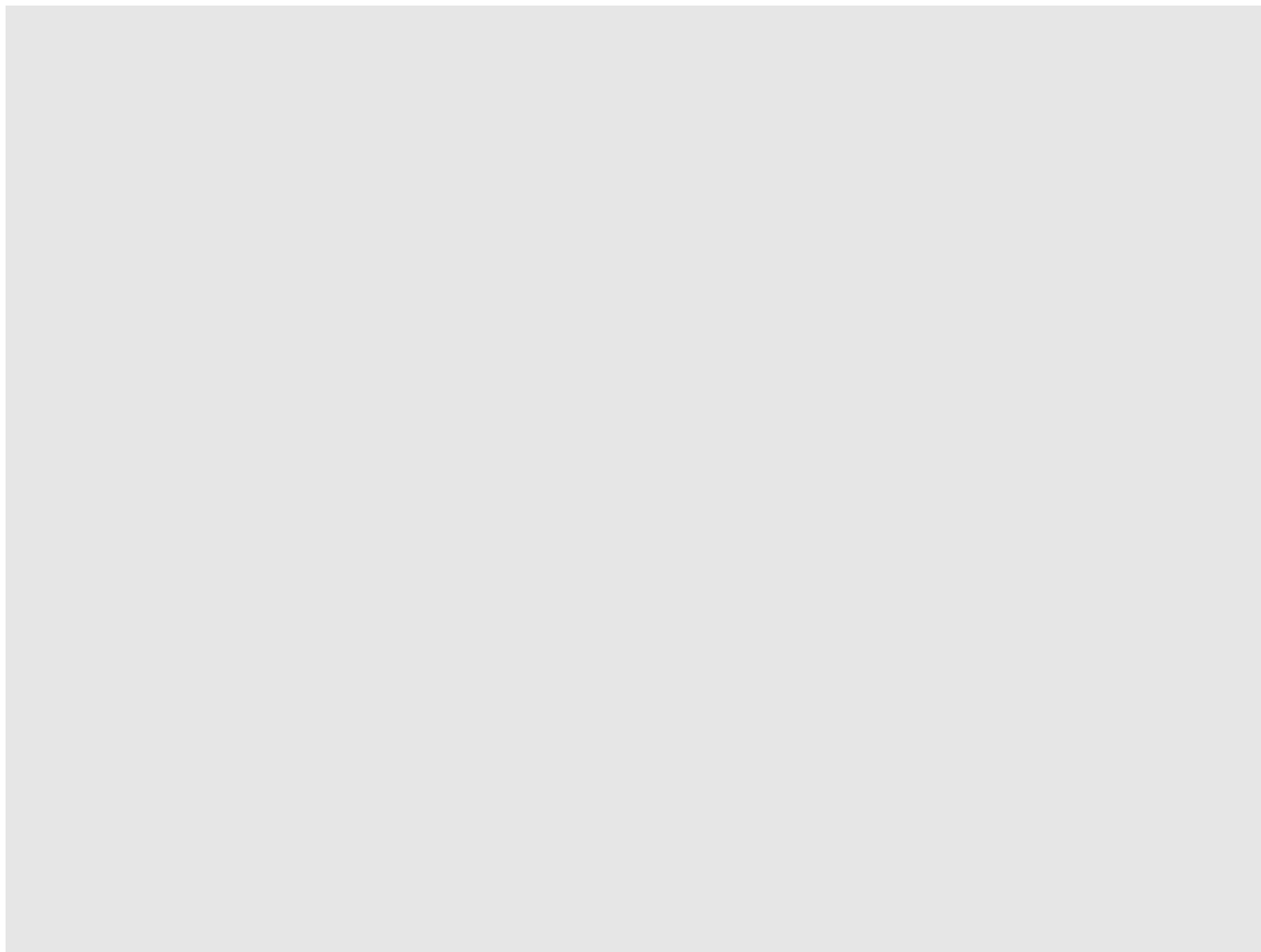
The Mavs' season kicked off at Washington State on Friday. Venable led the team with nine kills and had four digs in the 3-0 loss.

Omaha faced Central Michigan on Saturday, winning 3-0. Venable had 10 kills, six digs and two blocks.

The Mavs (1-1) return home for their first match at Baxter Arena against Western Michigan at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday.

“What we become is more important than what we achieve,” Buttermore said. “We want our players to graduate knowing how they can improve their lives and the lives of the people around them. And if they know that, I think we’ve been successful.”

Photos: Omaha volleyball hosts Kansas City



Omaha's Julia Owens (2) serves the ball during the first set of a college volleyball match against Kansas City at Baxter Arena in Omaha on Tuesday, Nov. 18, 2025.

NIKOS FRAZIER, THE WORLD-HERALD
