

BAILEY ANN WHITBY NAMED TO TSWA ALL-STATE VOLLEYBALL TEAM



Above: Bailey Ann Whitby: TSSAA-TSWA All-State Volleyball Team. (Photo by Ashley Owens)

By Ron Barry

If an actual poster is ever made of a high school athlete who can accurately portray the term “selfless leader,” there’s a good chance the poster child will be Bailey Ann Whitby.

This past week, the Crockett County senior setter was selected to the TSSAA All-State Volleyball Team by the Tennessee Sports Writers Association, one of just three West Tennesseans to crack the 15-player roster that is traditionally dominated by East Tennessee talent.

Whitby is just the ninth Crockett County player to be so honored, although this marks the eleventh time a Lady Cavalier has been named. A pair of previous selections – Savannah Pillow and Bella Archie – each made the team in two separate seasons.

What stands out most about Whitby, besides her sizeable talents for the sport, is the impression she’s stamped on her fellow teammates and the man who has been her head coach for her entire varsity career, Bobby Rawson.

“Bailey Ann is the most selfless player and never had an attitude on the court, which helped her contribute to being a leader,” said Kinleigh Lamb, another Lady Cav senior who often lined up next to Whitby in Crockett’s defensive back row. “She never showed any negative emotion at all, and she is definitely the true version of a leader.”

Senior libero Brooklyn Haynes – who also was right next to Whitby for most of her career – echoed Lamb’s assessment.

“Bailey Ann is someone who I look up to when it comes to being a teammate,” said Haynes, affectionately known to her teammates as “Hollywood.” “Other than the fact that she’s an amazing setter, she’s also a natural leader, a selfless and encouraging teammate – no matter how bad you’re doing – and just a fun person to get to share the court with. Getting to play with someone like that definitely doesn’t happen very often, but when it does it’s so much fun.”

Rawson, while thrilled that Whitby was deservedly selected after leading the Lady Cavaliers to a 33-10 record and a berth in the TSSAA State Tournament, is equally excited for the validation it brings to the school’s program and to the 2023 team itself.

“I am so proud and happy for BA,” Rawson said. “She has come a long way. I remember when she couldn’t get her serve to the net or her sets all the way to the outside hitter, to now being among the elite in the state. This is awesome – it shows how hard she worked. It shows what a great leader she was for this team.”

As Rawson continued, he touched on the fact that the All-State designation is more than just an individual honor.

“As proud as I am for BA, I’m also proud and happy for our team,” he said. “I know it’s an award that recognizes a player – and she deserves it – but this award doesn’t happen if our team is not successful. This is huge for Crockett County volleyball. What an awesome cherry on the top of a great season.”

Rawson, who is turning over the head coaching duties to Andrew Laman next season, specified some of the things Whitby has done to earn the All-State selection.

“She has put in the extra time working in the summer,” he said. “She has shown up early and stayed late around practice time; played club ball; and helped the middle school team learn the game. And she’s currently the coach of the sixth grade team at Alamo City School.”

Haynes, one of Whitby’s closest friends, isn’t shy about why.

“You always have the best stories when playing with BA,” she laughed. “My favorite plays were definitely the ones when she would dig a ball coming at her 1,000 miles per hour, and I would ask her, ‘How did you just get that ball up?’, and she would just say, ‘I don’t know – I closed my eyes!’ She is one of my favorite people and I will be forever grateful that I got to play with her.”

The full TSSAA-TSWA All-State Team for Class AA:

Outside hitters: Veda Barton, Volunteer, Sr.; Kendal Bryant, Creek Wood, Jr.; Lila Cade, Upperman, Sr.; Maddie Hurst, Grainger, Sr.; Carlee Lowry, Signal Mountain, Sr.; Noella Obi, Central Magnet, Sr.; Emily Redman, Signal Mountain, Sr.; Teagan Reed, Dyer Co., Jr.

Middle hitters: Faith Graham, Anderson Co., Sr.; Anarela Mejias Ayala, Valor Prep, Fr.; Becca Rogers, Signal Mountain, So.

Setters: Jaylynn Bullock, Anderson Co., Sr.; Lanna Click, Greeneville, Sr.; Bailey Ann Whitby, Crockett Co., Sr.

Libero: Lauren Hudson, Dyer Co., Sr.



Right: One of the ways BA kept her team loose in big points and games – sharing a laugh and a smile. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Constantly encouraging her teammates, along with back row buddy Kinleigh Lamb (5). (Photo by Ashley Owens)



Left: Getting ready to return one of those 1,000-mph serves Brooklyn Haynes talked about - before she "closed her eyes." (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Going up for a block with Joy Evans. (Photo by Ron Barry).



Above: BA setting Joy Evans for a kill. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: BA keeping the ball alive in the fifth set in the regular season match with Dyersburg - in which Crockett also came back to win from a 2-0 deficit. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: With her teammates after the District Tournament semifinals, coming back from two sets down to upend Dyersburg: (from left) Lily Riley, BA, Sarah Cherry, Brooklyn Haynes, Sadie Hoover, Khaki Hail, and Lynden Cole; (bottom left) Liv Owens. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: Whitby was part of a special senior class: (from left) BA, Kinleigh Lamb, Sarah Cherry, Brooklyn Haynes, Lynden Cole, and Joy Evans. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: You never which face BA (right) would throw at you next to keep you motivated... (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: ... or this one, with Lynden Cole, Katherine West, and Brennan Morris... (Photo by Ron Barry)



Left: ... or this one in the Regional Tournament final. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: BA preparing to rip a serve. (Photo by Ashley Owens)



Left: One of the most common sights of the season: BA making a perfect set for a teammate. (Photo by Ashley Owens)



Above: A win at the West Sectional earned a berth in the TSSAA State Tournament - BA is at the bottom of the celebration crush. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: The Lady Cavs pulled off a win in their second match of the State Tournament, securing a fifth-place finish, matching their best showing ever. (Photo by Ron Barry)