

[Girls volleyball preview: Courtney Parent takes as Frontier aims to continue incredible run of success](#)

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For the first time in 21 years, Sean MacDonald's hulking figure won't be patrolling the sidelines at Frontier girls volleyball matches. MacDonald retired from the girls program last year after 429 wins, 18 western Mass. titles and 11 state championships.

He's replaced by longtime assistant Courtney Parent, who's coaching the varsity team after nine years of working with MacDonald and coaching the JV squad. Parent said MacDonald was mostly absent through preseason practice, apart from helping her set up some new equipment they had ordered.

"I'm going to let you do your thing," MacDonald told her.

Parent has been working with MacDonald since 2007, when she was a seventh grader playing under him. At a recent preseason practice, it finally hit her that she was the one in charge now.

"I have my JV coach and my middle school coach to bounce ideas off of, but it was me and Sean for so long," Parent said. "Going into my ninth season, I'm like 'oh, it's me. It's me now. I get to call the shots.'"

Parent and her Redhawks team loaded with 10 seniors have "big goals" for this season and hope to make another deep run in the state tournament after last year's loss to Bellingham in the state semifinals. Frontier most recently won the state title in 2022 and has reached the state semifinals in each of the past four tournaments, which leaves an almost-impossible standard of success for Parent to reach.

"My hope also is that people don't feel like 'oh, she's not doing as good as Sean,'" Parent said. "Because I'm not Sean, and I have learned so much from him and I'm going to take that with me, but I'm not him and I'm not trying to redo what he did because I don't know if anyone could win as many as he did. I'm just trying to start my own."

Frontier's roster this year features just one underclassmen – sophomore Bailey Martin – and is led by senior captains Olivia Machon and Abigail Hernandez on the outside and Emilie Candalaria in the middle. Candalaria and Machon saw considerable playing time last year and Hernandez is set to see a large increase in playing time.

“I’m expecting some big things out of them,” Parent said. “They’re definitely going to be three of our go-to hitters.”

Much of the team have been playing together since eighth grade, and Parent coached them all as Frontier’s JV coach.

“To see them as seniors now is something special,” Parent said.

Frontier split matches at Dennis-Yarmouth and Nauset Regional over Labor Day weekend and lost in four sets to Westfield on Wednesday.

“As a school and as a program, we kind of have a target on our back, and we talked a little bit about how people might think that because Sean left, we’re just going to fall off the deep end,” Parent said. “We have big goals for this year and we want to make it back to a state title and we want to win western Mass. and we want to do well in our league.”

The Redhawks won’t be the only team with a target on their backs following a successful 2023 season.

Turners Falls had its best season in program history, as Kelly Liimatainen’s squad took home the Northern League title in the regular season before winning the program’s first Western Mass. title after sweeping Mount Greylock in the Class D title match.

In the Div. 5 state tournament, the Thunder made a run to the semifinals. With a talented roster coming back, expect Turners to make another push to bring more hardware back to the Powertown.

Here’s a look at how each team is shaking up heading into the season:

Athol

COACH: Donna Lajoie

LEAGUE/DIVISION: Northern/5

LAST YEAR’S RECORD: 8-13, lost in Div. 5 Round of 32

ROSTER: Olivia Mayer, Karleigh Chase, Abby Spooner, Evelyn Robinson, Giana Vaillancourt, London McGrath, Ella Reed, Skyla Basso, Morgan Brailey, Madeline Derosiers

OUTLOOK: Vaillancourt, a sophomore, is a player who can do a bit of everything for the Bears and is a player Lajoie says continues to improve.

Mayer is a senior leader who has also improved while Robinson is another versatile player who will play a big role in trying to get Athol back to the state tournament.

“We have a small squad but they seem to be bonding early on,” Lajoie said. “I truly feel we will be competitive. Some of the younger new girls look good in practice and I’m curious to see what they do come game time.”

Franklin Tech

COACH: Jade Cuevas

LEAGUE/DIVISION: Northern/5

LAST YEAR’S RECORD: 16-7, lost in Div. 5 Round of 32

ROSTER: Kristine Given, Shelby O’Leary, Lily Josephs, Breanna Kempf, Skylei LaPan, Emma Little, Anya Livingstone, Jenna Petrowicz, Emmy Nash, Emma Petersen, Amelia Rider, Taylor Underwood, Janiyah Wan, Lilyann Baldwin, Sarah Beckwith, Madison Pettingill

OUTLOOK: The Eagles have reached the state tournament each of the three years since the new format came into existence, and return a squad geared up to make it four in a row this fall.

O’Leary is a senior setter with experience while Beckwith and Pettingill, two freshmen, are players who have impressed early and will play big roles this season.

Frontier

COACH: Courtney Parent

LEAGUE/DIVISION: Eastern/4

LAST YEAR’S RECORD: 20-6, lost in Div. 4 semifinals

ROSTER: Olivia Machon, Arianna Miller, Sophia Pinaridi, Abigail Hernandez, Rozalyn Schmpp, Emilie Candalaria, Parrish Stilla, Hannah Davis, Melanie Ring, Lily Novak, Greta Hale, Caitlin Maio, Morgan Mason, Cadence Martin, Nola Payette, Bailey Martin

Greenfield

COACH: Amy Youmell

LEAGUE/DIVISION: Northern/5

LAST YEAR’S RECORD: 2-15

ROSTER: Mackensie Goncalves, Stella Verlander, Paloma Cruz, Julia Belville, Savannah Aldrich, Giomaris Collado Bonilla, Auburn Mass, Emelia Gray, Kristina Kostov, Odyssea Camero, Amy Mihailicenco, Alice Wondolowski, Bianca Reynolds, Karinna Kostov

OUTLOOK: Youmell takes over for longtime Green Wave coach Lisa Moore and will be looking to get Greenfield to the state tournament for the first time in the new format.

Goncalves and Verlander are experienced seniors; Goncalves a middle hitter and Verlander an outside hitter.

Camero, a sophomore, and Kostov, a freshman, are players to keep an eye on.

Mahar

COACH: Maeve Powell

LEAGUE/DIVISION: Northern/5

LAST YEAR'S RECORD: 5-14

ROSTER: Scarleth Aranda Lebron, Madelynn Burgess, Isabella Harrington, Kamryn Hart, Mckenzie Scribner, Angelina Alonso, Hayden Comeau, Aubrey Fortin, Mia Santana, Turin Gurganus, Kayla Quinn

OUTLOOK: With eight returning players, the Sens are hoping for a breakout season and got things started on the right foot with a sweep over Pioneer.

Burgess, a sophomore, will be Mahar's setter, Scribner, a sophomore, has stood out at the libero spot while Comeau, a junior, can play as a middle hitter or outside hitter.

Mohawk Trail

COACH: Sherri Lannon

LEAGUE/DIVISION: Northern/5

LAST YEAR'S RECORD: 12-5, lost in Div. 5 Round of 32

ROSTER: Palmer King, Jadelyn Wheeler, Adrian Grant, Emma Canaday, Megan Gabree, Morgan Raffa, Abby Moffatt, Emmalee Inman, Zoe Mojallali, Avery Hager, Ash Filliault, Maddie Finn, Makenzie Sonntag, Brooke Koshinsky

OUTLOOK: King returns a senior who can do a bit of everything while Grant and Wheeler are fellow returning seniors.

Canaday and Moffatt are returning varsity players who will play big roles this fall.

Pioneer

COACH: Shannon Connolly

LEAGUE/DIVISION: Northern/5

LAST YEAR'S RECORD: 6-13, lost in Div. 5 Preliminary Round

ROSTER: Oceana Duclos, Jacobia Tyminski, Abbie Ray, Emma Strong, Keira Gruszkowski, Louise Flagollet, Greta Lewis, Molly Gouin, Sophia Wood

OUTLOOK: The Panthers reached the state tournament last year and return a young roster without any seniors.

Strong, a sophomore, is talented in the service area, Tyminski and Ray, both juniors, will be the go-to options as hitters while Wood, an eighth grader, has impressed as a setter.

Turners Falls

COACH: Kelly Liimatainen

LEAGUE/DIVISION: Northern/5

LAST YEAR'S RECORD: 22-3, lost in Div. 5 semifinals

ROSTER: Madi Liimatainen, Tatianna Carr-Williams, Marilyn Abarua, Janelle Massey, Maddie Dietz, Addison Talbot, Gigi Marigliano, Maddie Haight, Jakhia Williams, Autumn Thornton, Shelby Beck, Olivia Wolbach

OUTLOOK: Madi Liimatainen was the Thunder's star last year and is in line for a monster senior season.

Carr-Williams and Abarua are fellow seniors in line for big campaigns, Massey and Dietz were also key players on last years Western Mass. championship team as sophomores while Haight, a freshman, stepped in for Taylor Greene as Turners' setter during the Thunder's win over Franklin Tech last week.

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