

# sports

## Kaitlin

## Bean

### *Inside the volleyball*

### *life of AU senior*

**BELLA PACINELLI**  
@bellapacinelli

Everyone struggles with self-doubt from time to time; the feeling of not being good enough and lacking the confidence needed to succeed.

Have you ever wondered what happens when you start believing in yourself? Perhaps you ace the test you have been studying so hard for or maybe you get the leadership position you have always wanted.

For senior libero, Kaitlin Bean, she would make Ashland University volleyball history within the same week.

Reaching 31 digs on Sept. 4 in a match at Urbana, Bean earned herself the fourth all-time dig total in a match in Ashland University history.

“For so long, the person holding me back was myself because I never believed I could do it,” Bean admitted.

Three days later in a home game against Davenport, Bean broke the record for the most digs in a single match with 33.

“In the past, I would have let a mistake sit in my head for the next four plays,” Bean said, “but it just finally hit me that ‘okay yeah, it was a mistake but go get the next one.’”

This internal struggle was not an easy feat for Bean. In fact, she credits the new coaches this year for being the reason that she is now able to quickly recover from an error.

“I don’t think I ever truly believed in myself until this year with our coaches,” Bean said.

An early childhood education major from Middlefield, Oh., Bean has played volleyball since she was 10 years-old. She started in fourth grade through her town’s recreation center.

Bean started playing club volleyball at the same time. She was a part of Club Renaissance and then CVC, both teams out of Cleveland. Living 50 minutes away from Cleveland, there was a lot of travel involved in her younger volleyball years.

“I am from the middle of nowhere, so everything was a drive,” Bean said. “My parents gave up so much of their time. We were traveling every weekend to go play somewhere.”

Bean acknowledges the sacrifices her parents have made for her over the years.

“They always believed in me,” Bean said. “They are the best parents and they deserve all the recognition they can get. If it weren’t for them I would not be where I am today with my volleyball career.”

Bean’s parents were athletes in high school. Her mother played volleyball and softball, while her

father played baseball. They have shown her the important role that sports can play in someone’s life.

Volleyball has given Bean many life experiences that she would not trade for the world.

“The biggest thing volleyball has given me are the memories,” Bean said. “I have traveled and seen so many things that I would not have seen without this sport.”

Namely, Bean has traveled to Miami, Dallas, and Atlanta.

“Some of my best friends are from volleyball and I could not imagine my life without them,” Bean said. “It is so great what the sport can give to you besides just volleyball.”

Bean was drawn to Ashland University because of former head coach, Cass Dixon, who was Bean’s club team coach in Cleveland since she was ten.

“I was really interested in coming here because I loved her coaching style,” Bean said.

Once Bean visited AU she knew it was the school for her and she could see herself being here for four years.

It is no doubt that playing a collegiate sport is tough. Nonetheless, Bean looks forward to the hard work that gets put into it.

She believes the amount of time and effort her team gives is very comparable to those at a Division I institution.

Bean still makes time to get involved in other activities on AU’s campus such as being a member of St. Jude, Kappa Delta Pi, and the unified sports team.

“Fall is definitely busier but the spring is when you get to enjoy more,” Bean said.

Volleyball has forced Bean to buckle down on time management when it comes to her academic success. She feels that years of club volleyball have prepared her for the constant travel of a varsity sport.

“It definitely takes a toll, but my team is very responsible with school work,” Bean said. “In the end, your grades are what is going to take you somewhere after college.”

She said their study tables on the bus are helpful in reminding her that she must hold herself to a high standard.

The relationship Bean has with her team is very special to her.

“They are like my second family,” Bean said. “If I need them I know they would all be there in a heartbeat.”

She credits her team for being the reason she is not afraid to be herself, calling herself a little weird and crazy sometimes.

“No one is afraid to be who they really are around each other and I think that is really important, especially in college,” Bean said.

This support for each other car-

ries over to their playing together. The team is very close and rely on each other in more ways than one.

“We have talked a lot about not being afraid, just being confident, and going at it on the court,” Bean said. “Everyone feels comfortable and confident like we are not going to lose.”

Bean is said to be very encouraging on the court, wanting the best from everyone and believing they have the ability to be great.

Senior graphic design and digital media production major, Michaela Ping, has played with Bean since freshman year.

“It is really awesome to be on a team with her because she works really hard and she inspires everybody else to work as hard as she does,” Ping said.

Bean’s natural talent and willingness to get better everyday is inspiring to her teammates.

“I cannot imagine the team without her,” Ping said. “She always puts in the extra mile, literally, sometimes she will just go run an extra mile”

Ping admires Bean’s fun-loving attitude and her ability to make everyone around her laugh.

“It feels great having her behind you on the court because you know that she has your back and she believes in you,” Ping said.

Bean believes it is her responsibility to encourage her teammates on and off the court.

“I think it is really important to have that positive energy and positive talk out there,” Bean said. “When we are positive with each other we play so much better.”

Every sport team needs a leader to keep the spirit alive.

“We are all leaders on our court

and at certain times someone might have the louder voice,” Bean said.

As stated before, new head coach, Kevin Foeman, has influenced Bean to be the strongest player she can be.

Getting a new coach her senior year was nerve-racking and surprising. However, the whole team had a say in who was to become the new head coach.

“As soon as we met with him and sat down and talked to him, I was like ‘he is going to get it, he is our coach,’” Bean said.

She knew he would be a great fit because he has not only coached them to be better players, but has also coached them to be better people in life.

“From day one when we got here, she embraced the changes we were making and she would do everything she could to help us out,” Foeman said.

He praised the character she possesses on and off the court, explaining that the person she is has been so important for the team this season.

“She is not worried about anything else except for helping the team,” Foeman said. “She is extremely selfless and wants every player to succeed. I am glad she is doing well. She deserves to have this breakout year.”

Her tenacity and work ethic are what makes her coaches the most proud.

“I don’t think I have ever seen a player who is always giving 100% effort where she never takes a break, she is always go go go,” AU assistant coach Sidney Fletcher said.

Foeman’s favorite part of coaching Bean has been to see how much

she improves from game to game.

“She is playing better every single practice,” Foeman said. “24 hours later she will make an adjustment, and she will do another thing that we have asked her.”

The coaches have also seen Bean lead the team in many ways.

“We want our seniors to lead, and she always takes it upon herself to do so,” Foeman said.

Bean’s desire to lead is in her nature as a person.

“I feel like being a senior, I must try to set a good example and show everyone what Ashland volleyball is,” Bean said.

When it comes to giving 100% effort all the time, she says she learned this at a very young age.

“I just try to hold the mentality to take the little things seriously,” Bean said. “It then just rolls over to taking the big things seriously.”

Volleyball has played a huge role in Bean’s life. Once she graduates, she could see herself playing in an adult league and eventually coaching.

She admits that her life will be much different without the responsibilities of volleyball, but she is looking forward to some time without it.

As for the rest of the season, Bean hopes to win the GLIAC championship and then the national championship.

With her newfound self-confidence, there is nothing that can stop this woman. Foeman said it best, “She is just getting started. Bean and her fellow seniors are leading this team to where we are right now and where we can be in the future.”



Kaitlin Bean celebrates with her teammates in a match against Grand Valley State on Sept. 8.

ZACH READ