

Foundation Christian Academy Volleyball Team Wins SSAC Championship

By Nick Nahas - June 1, 2022



The Foundation Christian Academy volleyball team won the Sunshine State Athletic Conference championship this past season, defeating Pineapple Cove Classical Academy. (Photo courtesy of the FCA yearbook staff.)

The Foundation Christian Academy (FCA) volleyball team won the Sunshine State Athletic Conference (SSAC) championship this past season, defeating Pineapple Cove Classical Academy after having a shortened season in 2020 due to COVID-19. The Lady Panthers joined the SSAC this season and have reached the pinnacle in a short time.

Junior outside/middle Faith Sullivan will always remember the end of the game in which FCA won its first SSAC volleyball championship in its history.

"The last set of the game I was thinking, 'We could win this,' and everyone was talking, especially Makayla (Harris), saying that 'After this, we are going to Beef 'O' Brady's,' and that's what we were chanting at the end. During the game, all the girls were encouraging, and everyone wanted to win, but we also wanted to have fun, and that's what we did."

Caitlin Smith, who has been with FCA for five years, two as an assistant coach and three as the head coach, was excited for her players after match point. She said that her seniors were crying tears of joy because they were overwhelmed with happiness.

"I was very impressed because, with our previous year, we had to cut the season short because of COVID-related stuff, and so I was really proud to see how far that had come

after not having had a season the year before,” said Smith. “There was a lot of shouting, a lot of excitement— parents were jumping off the bleachers, very excited too.”

Smith was proud that her older players stepped up into leadership roles this season and took the younger girls under their wings. With a lot of new faces on the roster, the upperclassmen did whatever it took to make the underclassmen comfortable, even if they had to switch positions. She said that the team’s blocking skills markedly improved and were their major strength.

The roster included Kylie Monahan, Makayla Harris, Addi Horton, Catherine Abney, Faith Sullivan, Kai Rodriguez, Ella Kahikina, Ananda Phillip, Rebecca Rodriguez, Evie Repp, Sophia Caruso, Marissa Brankley, Klara Sheild and Lyla Regans.

“The team this year was so fun,” said Sullivan. “It was only my first year playing volleyball for our school team. I will definitely keep playing. Coach Smith is so encouraging, and if you don’t get something, she will tell you how to fix it. That helped me so much, and that’s why I was able to be the best player I could be this year.”

FCA will look to build off of last season’s success and try to repeat as SSAC champs. The team will do workouts and conditioning during the summer and will start practicing again in July with the season starting in early August. Smith will lose four seniors, but she expects to have at least half of her players back for next year.

“I love the teamwork and how no matter what kind of day everyone would have, they would bring a happy attitude to play and cheer all the girls on,” said Sullivan. “For the team, something to work on is just remembering to have fun and remember it’s just a game. Otherwise, everybody is so sweet and all of us are so close, we are like a sisterhood.”

Nick Nahas

Nick Nahas has written for the Osprey Observer since 2016. He has lived in the Valrico area since 2002 and has his bachelor’s degree in mass communications from the University of South Florida. He is dedicated to covering sports in Hillsborough County at every level.