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Maine East setter Erika Christiansen playing well after year off

By **HEATHER RULE**
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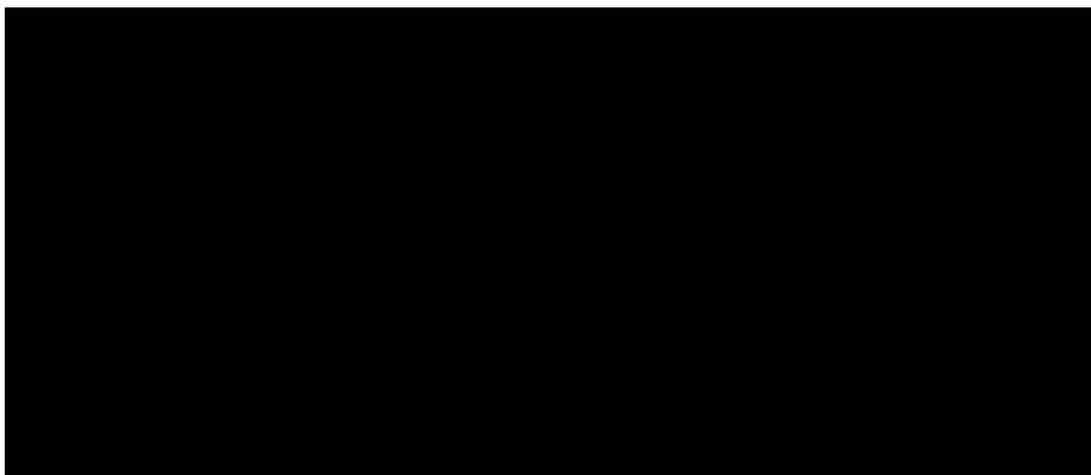
One of the Maine East girls volleyball team's top returning players actually didn't play last season. Erika Christiansen was sidelined with a cast on her left wrist. Now she's back.

"I think she feels 100 percent," said Kevin Bohn, the Blue Demons' first-year head coach who was a varsity assistant last year. "She's ready to go."

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While the injury was initially diagnosed as a sprain, the wrist still hurt at tryouts last fall. An MRI revealed a wrist fracture, leaving Christiansen in a cast for the season.

Her promising sophomore season as a varsity starting setter was over before she even played a point.

"To be a sophomore on varsity is an extremely great opportunity," Christiansen said. "And to just miss that for one injury that's been dragged out so long, it's really difficult for me."

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She'd go to the doctor after the MRI and expect to hear she could play but would instead be told "two more weeks, three more weeks," Christiansen said.

She worked with a trainer, primarily doing lower-body workouts, and never missed a practice or match last season. She jumped right into the club season last November.

"It feels really great to be back," said Christiansen, now a junior co-captain.

The Blue Demons (4-2 through Sunday, Sept. 11) have had a pretty successful year so far, according to Bohn, but they're looking for a little more consistency in their overall play. Still, he added that his team, with only three returning players, is quickly picking up what it needs to do to win at the varsity level.

"Overall, I think with us being a junior-heavy team and them getting used to the pace of a varsity match, I think we're doing OK," Bohn said.

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With Christiansen back, she's already left her mark on the court and in the locker room as a go-to player. She's one of the primary setters and one of the most-skilled players on the team, Bohn said. She does it all from passing to hitting in the front row and even sending a "really aggressive serve over the net," Bohn said.

"She's done a tremendous job in the setter's role," Bohn said. "I think it shows her level of commitment for the girls to recognize how dedicated she is by voting her as one of our captains."

Senior co-captain Maria Skoufos said Christiansen stepped up and is always trying to help her team.

"It's like she never even took a year off," Skoufos said. "She's back at it."

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Bohn, Christiansen and Skoufos all mentioned the three-set victory over Niles West on Wednesday, Aug. 31, as a memorable match so far in this young season. The Blue Demons came back after losing the first game to win 20-25, 25-21, 25-20.

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Christiansen, a Morton Grove resident who plans to play volleyball at Concordia University Wisconsin, recorded four blocks, 11 assists and three kills in the win.

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