

Sword follows in family's footsteps to Graceland volleyball



Louisburg senior Hailey Sword recently signed her letter of intent to play volleyball at Graceland University next season.

Hailey Sword is no stranger to Graceland University.

It is a school she has known about ever since she was young. Her father, Todd, played volleyball at Graceland.

So naturally, Hailey grew up around the sport and it became a big part of her life. As it turns out, she will be following in her father's footsteps.

Hailey signed her letter of intent to play volleyball at Graceland University next season after a successful career with the Louisburg program.

"I chose Graceland because I really like the school and campus," Hailey said. "They have what I want to study, and my dad went there, so it feels good to be carrying on the Sword family name at Graceland. I also had the opportunity to play

either of my sports.”

As easy as the decision was to attend Graceland, the choice of sports was the more difficult one. Hailey, who has also experienced a lot of success on the soccer pitch, also had the opportunity to play that on the college level.

In the end, volleyball won out and she is looking forward to joining the Graceland program.

“I was thinking about playing soccer, but soccer and volleyball are the same season so I had to choose one,” Hailey said. “It was a very difficult decision, but in the end I chose volleyball because I can see myself enjoying it more.”

Sword played a big part on the last two Wildcat volleyball teams that have ended their seasons at the state tournament. She helped the Wildcats to a fourth-place state finish each of the last two seasons.



Louisburg senior Hailey Sword signed her letter of intent to

join the Graceland University volleyball program. Seated next to Hailey are her parents Chris and Todd Sword. Standing (from left) is Graceland coach Stew McDole, Hailey's brother Matthew and Louisburg coach Leanna Willer.

This past year, Sword was named to the Class 4A state All-Tournament Team. She was also selected to the All-Frontier League honorable mention team.

Sword played all six rotations for Louisburg, and was big for the Wildcats at the net. Sword tallied a team-high 308 kills and finished with 42 aces.

Defensively, Sword was also strong in the back row as she was second on the team with 295 digs.

It is that success that helped her find a home at Graceland as Hailey officially achieved a dream she's had since she was little.

"I have always wanted to play college volleyball, ever since I was a kid," Hailey said. "It means a lot to me to be able to continue playing. It makes me feel like the person that a younger version of me would be looking up to.

"I am so excited to join the Graceland program because it is a very knowledgeable program and I know it will be a great experience. I know that I will continue to learn and get better."

Although Sword played all six rotations in high school, she is unsure of where she will play in college. None of that really matters to her, however. She is just looking forward to the experience.

"As of right now, I have no idea where I fit in the program, but I am excited to find out," she said. "My goals are to just enjoy it, and not put too much pressure on myself. I also want to hold myself to being flexible and putting the team first."