

OPENING WEEKEND



Sunday 13th October

National Volleyball Centre, Kettering

OFFICIAL PROGRAMME



MAAREE

WOMEN'S SUPER LEAGUE



WELCOME TO OPENING WEEKEND



Hello, and welcome to the much-anticipated Opening Weekend of the new 2024-25 Super League season!

This weekend marks the start of the journey for all 20 of our Super League teams, each with their sights firmly set on the Final 4, which will be held at the iconic Crystal Palace in London on 5th and 6th April 2025.

Last season we saw tremendous growth across our platforms, with increased engagement on our website and social media channels through dynamic short-form videos, match previews, and game round-ups.

We're excited to continue building on this momentum throughout the 2024-25 season, which promises to be hugely exciting for everyone involved.

The increased exposure we have secured has allowed us to secure an exciting new partnership with DYNAMIK, the official sponsor of the Men's Super League. DYNAMIK is committed to supporting the development of volleyball in England, stating: "We are thrilled to be part of this journey with Volleyball England and to help grow the sport in the coming years."

In addition to our new partnership with DYNAMIK we are pleased to extend our MAAREE partnership, which first started last season. MAAREE also share our passion for the sport with their founder saying: "This partnership means so much to us because it embodies the core of MAAREE's mission – to empower women in sport by providing them with the performance-enhancing support they need."

In addition, we're proud to announce the launch of Super League Live, which will allow us to broadcast 10 feature matches across the regular season, as well as live streams this weekend and then culminating with the Final 4.

A special thank you goes out to the volunteers, referees, and Hub staff for their hard work and dedication in making this weekend possible. We also extend our gratitude to the friends, families and fans of the teams who have travelled to the National Volleyball Centre to support the top players in the league.

Lastly, we'd like to thank the centre staff in Kettering for their continued support in helping us showcase this fantastic sport at the highest level. Let's get the season started!

MAAREE **WOMEN'S
SUPER
LEAGUE** 

**OPENING
WEEKEND** 

10:30

Lionhearts Vinarius v Cambridge ARU

12:30

Darkstar Derbyshire v Team SideOut Polonia

14:30

Wessex v Durham Palatinates

16:30

Essex Rebels v Leeds Gorse

18:30

Malory Eagles UEL v University of Nottingham

VOLLEYBALL 101

A whistle-stop guide to the fast-paced and thrilling game!

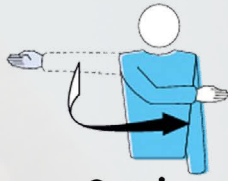
- A volleyball game consists of two teams of six players each, separated by a net. Volleyball positions are Setter, Middle, Outside, Opposite and Libero.
- Two teams will rally - or hit the ball back and forth over the net - until a fault occurs.
- There is a maximum of three touches per side (a block does not count as a touch).
- The objective is to score points by sending the ball over the net, and grounding it on the opponent's side of the court.
- Volleyball matches are made up of sets, typically three or five sets. All matches at Final 4 will be played as best of five.
- Each set is played to 25 points. Sets must be won by at least two clear points. Tie break sets (fifth set) are played to 15 points.

Quick guide rules

- Only six players on the floor at any given time: three in the front row and three in the back row.
- Players may not touch the ball twice in succession (a block is not considered a hit).
- A ball may be played off the net during a volley and on a serve.
- A ball hitting a boundary line is in.
- A ball is out if it hits an antenna, the floor completely outside the court, any of the net or cables outside the antennae, the referee stand or pole, or the ceiling above a non-playable area.
- It is legal to contact the ball with any part of a player's body.
- It is illegal to catch, hold or throw the ball.
- A player concedes the point if they touch the net.
- A player cannot block or attack a serve from on or inside the three-metre line.

REFEREE 101

Get to grips with the Officials' signals



Service
Hand moves from serving team side to signal the start of a point



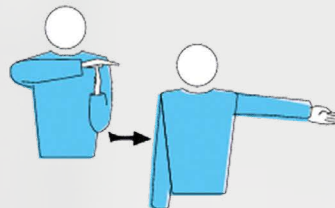
Ball Touched
The ball was touched before going dead



Ball Touched
The ball was touched before going dead



Ball Out
Flag raised vertically to signal ball landing out of court



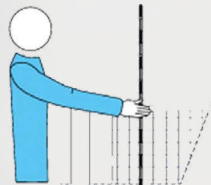
Timeout
A team has called for a time out (30seconds)



Ball In
The ball landed in the area of play



Four Touches
Ball has been touched four times giving the other team a point



Net Touch
A player has touched the net during a point



Ball Out
The ball landed out of the area of play



Crossing Space Fault
The ball has touched an antenna, wall or other surface not in play

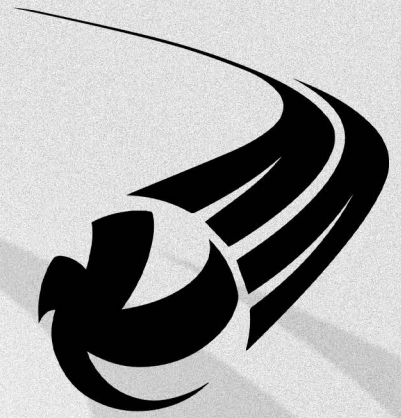


Double Touch
The player has touched the ball twice in a row



Rotation fault
Players are not in correct location at the time of service

OPENING WEEKEND



Cambridge ARU

Match one

10:00 Sunday 13th October

Lionhearts Vinarius

LONDON
LIONHEARTS
VOLLEYBALL CLUB

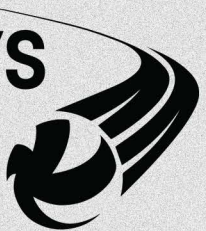
CAMBRIDGE
VOLLEYBALL CLUB

MATCH 1

Volleyball England Opening Weekend 2024

MAAREE Women's Super League

MAAREE WOMEN'S
SUPER
LEAGUE



LIONHEARTS VINARIUS

After performing a great escape to maintain their Super League status, London Vinarius have not only changed their name, but also looked to have strengthen their side considerably.

Formerly the Lionhearts, they seemed doomed to Division 1 volleyball for 2024-25 having spent much of the season anchored to the foot of the table.

But key wins by the Londoners against first Darkstar Derbyshire and then Coventry and Warwick Riga in a relegation decider saw them pull themselves off the bottom and set up a play-off match with Division 1's second placed side Stockport.

In that, they dominated from start to finish to claim a 25-7, 25-14, 25-15 win and ensure top-flight volleyball has remained at the Mulberry Academy, Shoreditch for another season.



Social channels

 [Lionhearts_Volleyball](#)

 [Londonlionhearts.volleyball](#)

But there are signs that survival may not be the only thing on the team's minds this season after what appears to be some canny summer recruitment.

The most impressive of those new faces looks to be Maria Sviridova, who, in Team SideOut Polonia's colours, was the Women's Errea Player of the Season in 2023-24.

Also brought in for the new campaign are Lyubomira Atanasova (Inter Volleyball Club), Camilla De Tomin (Quiliano Volley), Mallory Porcher (Cambridge ARU), Maeve Davitt (King's College London) and Cecilia Tognini (SQUAD Volleyball).

That quintet of players will replace outgoing players Alison Youten, Yuchin Lai, Angie Pisiritzi and Priscila Alves.

One of their key players is set to be libero Anu Munkhtur, who joined from Malory Eagles in January and helped play a key part in the turnaround in fortunes with "her defensive skills and ability to read the play make her exciting to watch."

Gloria Francalanci has continued as captain while Vinarius are coached by Davide Tiberti who is optimistic the club can stay up once more.

"Our aim is to play good, entertaining volleyball and be competitive against all Super League teams," he said.

"We want to avoid relegation which means a top-six finish. It will be tough, but we have some exciting new players and Super League experience that we did not have 12 months ago when we were new to the league."

Sponsor

Vinarius



CAMBRIDGE ARU

While Cambridge struggled to pose problems for the sides who qualified for Final 4 last season, more often than not they confidently dispatched those teams who were struggling at the bottom.

The result was a steady mid-table finish, which the club will be keen to build on this time round in light of a number of new signings, both from near and far.

There are those who are already in the city, such as Julianna Nowaczek who has joined from Cambridge University and Annarita Ranco, who was previously with Rhinos Volley Cambridge.

There are those who are coming from further afield, including Katarina Knezevic, who played in the Super League last season with Coventry and Warwick Riga, and Raquel Pereira, who moves south of the border from Volleyball Aberdeen - and is considered by the club as one to watch for 2024-25.

And then there are those who are coming a long way, from overseas, with Nicolay Weiwanko moving from Sporting Clube Portugal and Ellie Middleton recruited from Chowan University.

Mallory Porcher has left for London Vinaris, but the core of the team remains strong, with versatile all-court performer Juliana Pallamin continuing as captain.

The club's home base is at the Stephen Perse Foundation (Senior School), where Head Coach this season will be Levy Luong.

He is not putting pressure on the team by making an early-season targets public, but instead wants his players to enjoy their matches.

"My hopes for this season is that we meet our standards and goals that we set for ourselves," he said.

"Performing to the best of our abilities, playing with energy, enthusiasm, effort and grit are just a few key ingredients."



Social channels

 **cambridgevc1**
 **CambridgeVC**

Sponsors

Anglia Ruskin University
3 Dimensions



WOMEN'S SUPER LEAGUE TITLE SPONSOR



MAAREE



OPENING WEEKEND



Team SideOut Polonia

Match two

12:30 Sunday 13th October

Darkstar Derbyshire

MATCH 2

Volleyball England Opening Weekend 2024

MAAREE Women's Super League

MAAREE **WOMEN'S SUPER LEAGUE**



DARKSTAR DERBYSHIRE

It has been a summer of change for the University of Derby-based Darkstar Derbyshire as they seek to improve on an eighth place finish in Super League last season.

Two of last season's squad have joined other English teams, one player is heading back home to Italy and one player taking a break from the game – but that does mean the club have been able to shake things up a little.

Two strong signings are names that will already be familiar with followers of the MAAREE Super League.

Alice Brand has been a cornerstone of the all-conquering Durham Palatinates side in recent seasons, helping the team win the Super League title again in 2023-24, where she led by example as captain.

She will be joined by Lauren Cadwgan who has returned to the club where she started last season – turning out at Opening Weekend – after a spell playing professionally abroad.

Another to sign on in Derbyshire is Jodie Taylor who has hopped across the border from Loughborough, while the club are also expecting recruit two new players from the USA, who will be studying as scholars at the University of Derby.

Current England Women's coach Maria Bertelli and fellow Olympian Audrey Cooper head up the coaching staff, and they hope their charges can steadily grow into the season as it unfolds.

"Our aims are to be competitive, to be a difficult team to play and to enjoy it," they said. "We are looking forward to the new season; we have a young team with lots of potential to grow which is exciting.

"We want to develop our style for this group, build as a team and show progress throughout the season.

"We want to deliver more consistency in our performance levels and be more competitive against the top teams which, in turn, will help us progress up the table.

"We are really excited to see Alice and Lauren return to the team and continuing to see them develop as players and leaders.

"Watch out also for Hajar El Alouani, a young player who has come through the club and is continuing to learn and develop... look out for her offensive power and passion!"



Social channels

 **Darkstarvball**

 **Darkstar Volleyball**

 **Darkstarvball**

Sponsor
University of Derby



TEAM SIDEOUT

POLONIA

Team Sideout Polonia enter the new season with both confidence and determination after a mixed but successful campaign last year.

They claimed a dominant 3-0 victory over Durham Palatinates in the National Cup final but fell just short of a 'double' when they were reverse swept 3-2 by the same Northern side in the Super League final.

The team has seen significant roster changes, with the departure of Maria Sviridova, the Errea Player of the Season, who has joined Lionhearts Vanirius.

Other key losses include Jaden Scott, who has moved to rivals Malory Eagles, as well as Emma Bubola, Gaia Canevari, and Abby Bertics, who have all moved abroad.

However, Sideout has strengthened with several exciting additions, including Carla Mulli, who has

experience playing for Utrecht in the Netherlands as well as the Luxembourg national team, Kasey Bell from Durham Palatinates and Yohana Biavati.

Key players to watch this season include Merve Akin, returning from injury and highly motivated, and Alice Jagielska, who comes into the season with great momentum after a summer of beach volleyball success.

New signing Mulli is also expected to make an immediate impact on the court.

Head coach Mark Kontopolis is ambitious for the season ahead and said: "We came incredibly close to doing the 'double' last year, and this season our goal is clear: we want both the Cup and Super League titles.

"Despite losing some key players, our new additions give us the depth and firepower we need. The league will be more competitive, but that only motivates us more."

With a reloaded squad and high expectations, Team Sideout Polonia are set to compete fiercely for top honours this season.



Social channels

-  **Team_sideout**
-  **TeamsideoutVB**
-  **Sideout_UK**
-  **SideoutUk**



HUNGRY?

Fresh pizza available outside

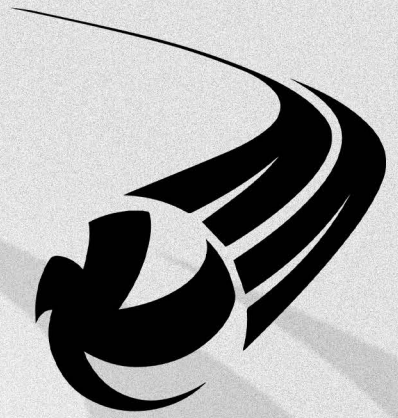
The Wood Oven

Local Artisan Pizza



MENU

OPENING WEEKEND



Durham Palatinates

Match three

14:30 Sunday 13th October

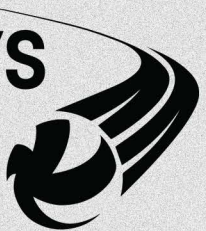


MATCH 3

Volleyball England Opening Weekend 2024

MAAREE Women's Super League

MAAREE WOMEN'S
SUPER
LEAGUE



Wessex

WESSEX

As champions of NVL Division 1, Wessex will hope to carry some of the momentum they built up over a memorable 2023-24 season into the MAAREE Women's Super League.

The South Coast club wrapped up the title in style by travelling all the way up to closest rivals Stockport and claiming a five-set victory.

After that high, the club has got back to work over the summer to prepare for life in the top flight and has added two new overseas players to their squad in a bid to ensure they can compete with the country's elite.

Americans Kenzi Thornton (University of Arkansas) and Kylie Koontz (Minot State University) are ready to play their part, as is Anni Jortikka, a regular beach volleyball competitor.

Players who have left the club since the end of last season are Natalia Gruszczyska, who has signed for Northampton, Sophie Heldenbrand, who has returned to the USA, and Kirsty Star, who recently played alongside Alice Jagielska in the recent Queen & King of the Court London Showcase beach tournament in Canary Wharf.

Interestingly, Wessex, which calls Parkstone Grammar School its home, doesn't have a regular captain – instead it rotates.

The club feels this method works well because the team members pride themselves on a strong team culture with lots of leaders.

Head Coach Dave Gunter recently attended the CEV Coaches' Convention in Sofia, Bulgaria along with fellow English coach Jane Ashbrook of Frodsham.

He believes his Wessex squad can turn a few heads and cause a few upsets during the course of the season.

"Moving from Division 1 into the Super League will be a challenge, but one we are looking forward to... we hoped to evolve during the season," he said.

"I don't think it's case of having a player who is our one to watch. I think it's a matter of watching all our players and seeing how they respond to the challenge of the Super League.

"As a coach, I want us to enjoy the experience, compete throughout and hopefully entertain a few people along the way."



Social channels

 **WESSEXVOLLEYBALL**

 **WESSEXVOLLEYBALL**

Sponsor
Hendy Vauxhal



DURHAM PALATINATES

Recent history – three Super League titles in a row – underline that Durham Palatinates remain the team to beat.

When Team SideOut Polonia defeated them in straight sets in the National Cup Final in April, it suggested that the North East side might have finally met their match.

Yet, a week later, despite trailing 2-1 in sets at one stage, the North East side managed to turn things around and a 3-2 success at the National Volleyball Centre ensured they reigned supreme once again.

As ever, it has been a summer of change for Durham, with only Natalie Colfescu and Defne Cinar remaining from last year's all-conquering side.

It means Taylor Litteken, Kennadie Jake-Turner, Emily Haber, Kasey Bell, Camryn Carfino, Alice Brand, Susanna Sutki, Hanna Laube, Sydney Aber, Sydney Stevens and Malea Stanton will not be figuring this time around.

However, a fresh crop of talent has been training hard at the Graham Sports Centre, including new captain Ali Leskow, who joins after previously leading the Ambrose University Lions in Canada.

She will team up with Aleksa Curta (Eckerd College, USA), Emily Grace Sheperis (Loyola University New Orleans, USA), Jennifer Lumsden Pineda (Aztecas UDLAP, Mexico), Caroline Belmontez (Saint Anselm College, USA), Jamie Dailey (Columbia University and Amherst College, USA), Renae Regal (Concordia University, Canada), Claire Cossarini (UBC Thunderbirds, Canada) and Tyla Cutrie (University of North Carolina, USA).

It remains to be seen how the new players will blend together, but it is something Durham have done successfully in the past and Head Coach Paul Welsh is hoping for a fourth title on the bounce.

"Our hopes for the season are to play an exciting style of volleyball which will hopefully bring us more success this year," he said.

"We would love to go one better than last year by also winning the National Cup."



Social channels



Durham_volleyball



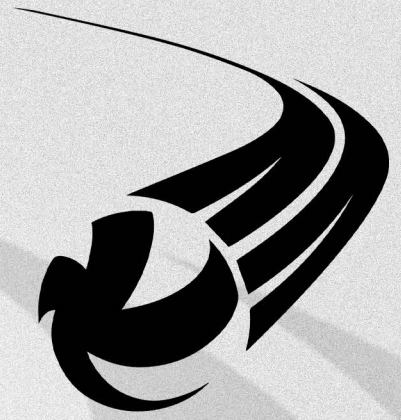
SOMETHING SWEET?

Sugar Rush have a plethora of sweet treats for you to get your teeth into!

MENU



OPENING WEEKEND



Leeds Gorse

Match four

16:30 Sunday 13th October

Essex Rebels

WE REBEL

MATCH 4

Volleyball England Opening Weekend 2024

MAAREE Women's Super League

CONCORDIA
RESIDENTIAL

ESSEX REBELS

Essex Rebels are entering the 2024-25 season with high hopes after a series of close calls last year. The team finished fourth in the Super League, narrowly losing the Bronze Medal match to Malory Eagles in a tense 3-2 battle.

Additionally, they reached the semi-finals of the National Cup, where they were pipped by Durham Palatinates, and finished as runners-up in the BUCS Championships, losing again to Durham in the final in Loughborough.

Despite last season's disappointments, the Rebels, with Head Coach Alex Chinery at the helm, are excited for the new campaign, and have made some major signings.

Julia Haynie from San Diego State University is the stand-out addition. A middle blocker with a lightning-quick arm and a high vertical, she is expected to be a key player this season.



Having already played under Chinery during a gold medal success at the 2022 Global Challenge tournament, she brings five years of NCAA experience and the versatility to play in the middle or on the right side.

Other key new additions include Alexis Diaz-Infante from Sporteam12-Prometeo, Zyaire-Prettie Garrit from Talladega College and Laetitia Brunat from Infomaniak Geneve Volley.

With these new recruits, the team is looking to build on and improve the strong core group returning from last season.

However, the team has also seen some significant departures. Kathryn Attar has moved to Hungary to play for VEHIR-VESEC, while Ellen Floyd, Brianne Carmody, and Leah Blight have retired, leaving gaps to fill.

Coach Chinery is optimistic about the season ahead and said: "We've had a great pre-season, and leaders have emerged within the group.

"We're blending new talent with our returning players, and we're aiming to reach the finals in both the Cup and the Super League this time around."

With a well-rounded squad and strong leadership, Essex are poised to take on the league's top teams and make a serious push for silverware this season.

Social channels

 **ESSEXREBELSVOLLEYBALL**

 **ESSEXREBELSVOLLEYBALL**

 **ESSEXREBELSVB**

Sponsors

University of Essex
Hunters

Concordia Residential
R&B Refurbishments



LEEDS GORSE

Leeds Gorse are looking ahead to another season in the top flight of the MAAREE Women's Super League after finishing sixth last year.

The club's first challenge will be a tough, facing an Essex Rebels side, who finished fourth last season and narrowly missed out on the bronze medal after losing to Malory Eagles at Final 4.

Leeds have strengthened their squad with the addition of Holly Tempest from Darkstar, though they'll miss the experience of Olga Guardeva, who has moved to the University of Nottingham.

Key to their success this season could be the form of powerhouse Eva Borrowdale, whose consistent performances have seen her climb the ranks in the league's statistics tables.

In addition, setter Molly Van Essen is pivotal with her efficient service game, which has helped drive the team's overall performance.

As hosts of a Super League Live weekend later this season, featuring a double-header of two women's teams, Leeds will also have the opportunity to showcase their abilities in front of a home crowd in December.

Last season when facing Essex Rebels, Leeds missed out in both matches, but not without putting up a fight - a 3-2 loss at home being followed by a narrow 3-1 loss in Colchester.

Gorse finished 2023-24 well, with three wins from their last four and will hope to be able to channel this into their first game of 2024-25.

Head Coach Elaine Brown said: "Following on from the success of the teams recent seasons in the NVL, we've set some high goals for the season and looked at how we can collectively achieve these with the support of the club.

"The team knows it has a gap to bridge to the top teams in the country, but has the belief to achieve this. We are not content at merely being part of the Super League and have set ourselves the target of arriving at Final 4 come the end of the season!"



Social channels

 **LEEDS_VOLLEYBALL**

 **LEEDSVOLLEYBALL**

 **LEEDSVOLLEYBALL**

Sponsors

The Gorse
Academies Trust
MK Sports Therapy



HER CALL

Supporting every female referee in England to develop, grow and further enhance their knowledge and experience of refereeing.

HER CALL



OPENING WEEKEND





University of Nottingham

Match five

18:30 Sunday 16th October

Malory Eagles UEL



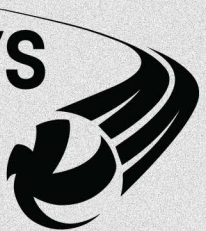
University of Nottingham Sport
Volleyball

MATCH 5

Volleyball England Opening Weekend 2024

MAAREE Women's Super League

MAAREE WOMEN'S
SUPER
LEAGUE



MALORY EAGLES UEL

A third place and bronze medal for Malory Eagles was the reward for a strong season-long showing from the London-based side across the 2023-24 campaign.

The Eagles were close to causing an upset in the Final 4 when 2-1 up in sets on the Durham Palatinates in the semi-finals, only for the defending champions to fight back and clinch the match 3-2.

But the side led by the coaching team of Jefferson Williams, Ian Legrand and Carol Gordon showed real character and determination to complete a reverse sweep against the Essex Rebels in the Bronze Medal Match that followed, with captain Chloe Allen sparking the celebrations by completing the final kill.

The American is back to lead the side once more in 2024-25, with home matches once again being staged at Ernest Bevin College and the UEL SportsDock.

A number of familiar faces will be at her side, but there will also be some new blood to welcome into the ranks, with Claire Kellum pairing her volleyball with pursuing a Masters in Pharmaceutical Science.

The American's will to succeed saw her give up the chance to enjoy a graduation party back home and instead she asked for online donations to further her playing career in the UK.

Also returning to the club is fellow American Jaden Scott, who has had a year away at Team Sideout Polonia.

The club will, however, be without the talents of American Eileen Shi and Canadian Kely Warmington whose impressive performances have helped them secure professional contracts in Greece and Denmark respectively.

Also moving on are Harriet Philip-Edwards, who has moved up to Newcastle for university and Maddie Buist, who has returned home to Australia following injury.

The three coaches view last season as a positive one but still know there is more to do to consistently mix it with the league's very best.

"Last season was a successful one, but we were disappointed to lose to SideOut Polonia and Durham in key matches," they said.

"We hope to improve in the areas of our play that let us down last season. Despite the loss of some key players, the squad remains strong and we have prepared well, so are ready to do battle."



Social channels



Malory Eagles



Malory Eagles Volleyball Club

Sponsors

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UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM

The University of Nottingham heads into the 2024-25 season with a degree of momentum after finishing fifth last year and just missing out on the Final 4.

They closed out the season on a high, winning their final three matches, including a thrilling 3-2 victory over Team SideOut Polonia, who went on to win the National Cup and finish as Super League runners-up.

This impressive result showed Nottingham's potential to compete with the top teams in the league and now the Midlands will look to push on and achieve greater consistency.

This weekend, UON will face a tough opening test in their season's curtain raiser against Malory Eagles, a team they twice lost to last year.

However, with new additions and a revitalised

squad, the Green and Golds will be looking for a different outcome this time.

The team's new signings include Molly Clark, Beth Gilbert and Ena Kovav have experience of playing in England junior squads, and American duo Catherine Krieger and Julia Moraes.

It means they hope to be well-equipped to deal with losing the influential Sandra Korusiewicz and Mar Vives – the latter, whose excellence saw her named in the Errea Team of the Season, having graduated.

One player to particularly watch out for is former California Baptist University player Krieger, who hails from Texas. She is a stand-out addition with one of the best swings on the team and a serve that will trouble any opponent.

With fresh talent recruited and the determination to improve on last year's performances, the University of Nottingham team believes it is poised to challenge for a top-four spot - and make an indelible mark on the season in the process.



Social channels



UONVOLLEYBALL



**University of
Nottingham Sport**
Volleyball

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www.volleyballengland.org/clubs/club-finder