

A familiar face is moving up to lead the Black Hawk College volleyball team.



After three seasons as an assistant coach, Matt Gropel is taking over the Braves program as its new head coach.

"He fully understands what we are trying to build at this college and he embraces the commitment that we have to the student experience," said Arnie Chavera, BHC athletic director.

"Coach Gropel brings a high level of energy, which is infectious to the team and to the athletic department," he said. "We are excited to have him leading our volleyball program into the future."

Gropel has daily and long-term goals for his players.

"Each day, my goal is to make our student-athletes better students, athletes and members of society," he said. "My ultimate goal is to build our volleyball program to a point where every player exits our program with a solid sense of accomplishment."

As a college coach, Gropel understands the importance of academics and the doors an education can open.

"It may be cliché, but it is 'student-athlete,' not 'athletic-student.' Being a student takes priority," he said.

“What an incredible opportunity we can give our students – they can play a sport they have loved since they were little and earn a degree.”

Gropel has coached multiple teams in all age divisions at Platform Elite Volleyball Club in Bettendorf, IA, since 2016 and currently is the associate club director.

As a new coach, he was paired with Jim Dietz, the award-winning head coach of the Lincoln Land Community College Loggers, through the American Volleyball Coaches Association mentorship program.

Gropel’s interest in volleyball sparked when one of his daughters, a sixth-grader at the time, came home from school and announced that she wanted to play volleyball. The fast action of the game quickly hooked Gropel. He has enjoyed watching his daughters progress from humble 12u beginnings through the rapid, precision-skilled pace of college volleyball – two of them played collegiately.

In 1994, Gropel graduated from Minnesota State University Mankato with a bachelor’s degree in computer information science. Currently he is pursuing a master’s degree in sport psychology through Capella University.

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