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[Brown, Vikings movin' on up](#)

By Ryan Nagelhout [Niagara Gazette](#)

NIAGARA FALLS — Alex Brown had a good summer, and she's certainly carried that success into the fall.

The Grand Island junior worked hard at a number of volleyball camps and was rewarded when the mail came.

"I got a letter from Maryland after the Baltimore tournament this year and I went to their camp," Brown said.

Once again, Brown impressed, and after some formalities the Terrapins offered a scholarship.

"It's great," Brown said. "I don't have to worry about that anymore."

Finding a college as a junior is a relief, but the outside hitter is only going to get better in her time as a Viking.

"Al worked her butt off this past year," Vikings volleyball coach John Head said.

One key to her improvement is her time spent with the Niagara Frontier club volleyball team, which Head said she cracked the starting lineup for and immediately took off.

"She came in as the young girl on the team, she was only a sophomore, and she just got to playing with all those girls that were D-I athletes," Head said. "She got to play with those girls every day and she was exposed to that level of play and there's usually two responses there: You sink or you swim. She obviously rose to that challenge."

Brown has had little trouble athletically and is the Niagara Frontier League high jump champion three years running. That vertical is far from wasted on the floor.

"She's got the athleticism to impress," Head said. "You can take a lot of athletes into volleyball and you can make them good, but it's hard to make them great. That's where the hard work comes in and that's what took her to that next level."

With her height (6-foot-1) and ability on the floor, Brown is one of the most feared players on a very strong Grand Island team that also includes Kayla Pyc, Kallie Banker and Cassie Oursler.

“You can just hear when she hits a ball — there’s a difference,” Head said.

The Vikings (8-1 NFL) are also trying to take a big step forward this year. A big win last Thursday against North Tonawanda, the Lady Jacks’ first Niagara Frontier League loss in almost two years, could be that stepping stone.

“It was a good win,” Head said of the 3-1 rally against NT. “Now the slate’s kind of reset and everyone has a chance to win it. Everyone controls their own destiny, and that’s what we want. We didn’t want to rely on other teams, we wanted to control it ourselves.”

The Vikings took care of business on Wednesday in a five-set win over Lockport, avenging their only loss in league play this year. Brown had 36 kills and six blocks in the 25-20, 25-21, 23-25, 19-25, 25-12 win, while Pyc added 17 kills and Banker had 45 assists.

“We were just back and forth all game,” Head said. “We just kind of pulled away in the end of the first two and we didn’t finish game three. They played really well in the fourth game.”

Still it was the Vikings who outlasted the Lady Lions in the fifth game, a 25-12 final that keeps Grand Island atop the NFL standings