

sport

NORTH SHORE GUIDE TO THE GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

Set for glory

Cameroonian looks to lead Cap volleyball

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VOLLEYBALL setters have to be givers.

Power hitters get to experience the joy and glamour of pounding the ball at their opponents, middle blockers get the thrill of stuffing opposing hitters, and even defensive specialists can show-off with acrobatic digs and saves.

But the setter's role is to give opportunities to his or her teammates and put them in a position to succeed.

This year the Capilano College men's volleyball team seems to have found a real giver to play setter and he comes to the Blues from a very unlikely place: the Cameroonian national team.

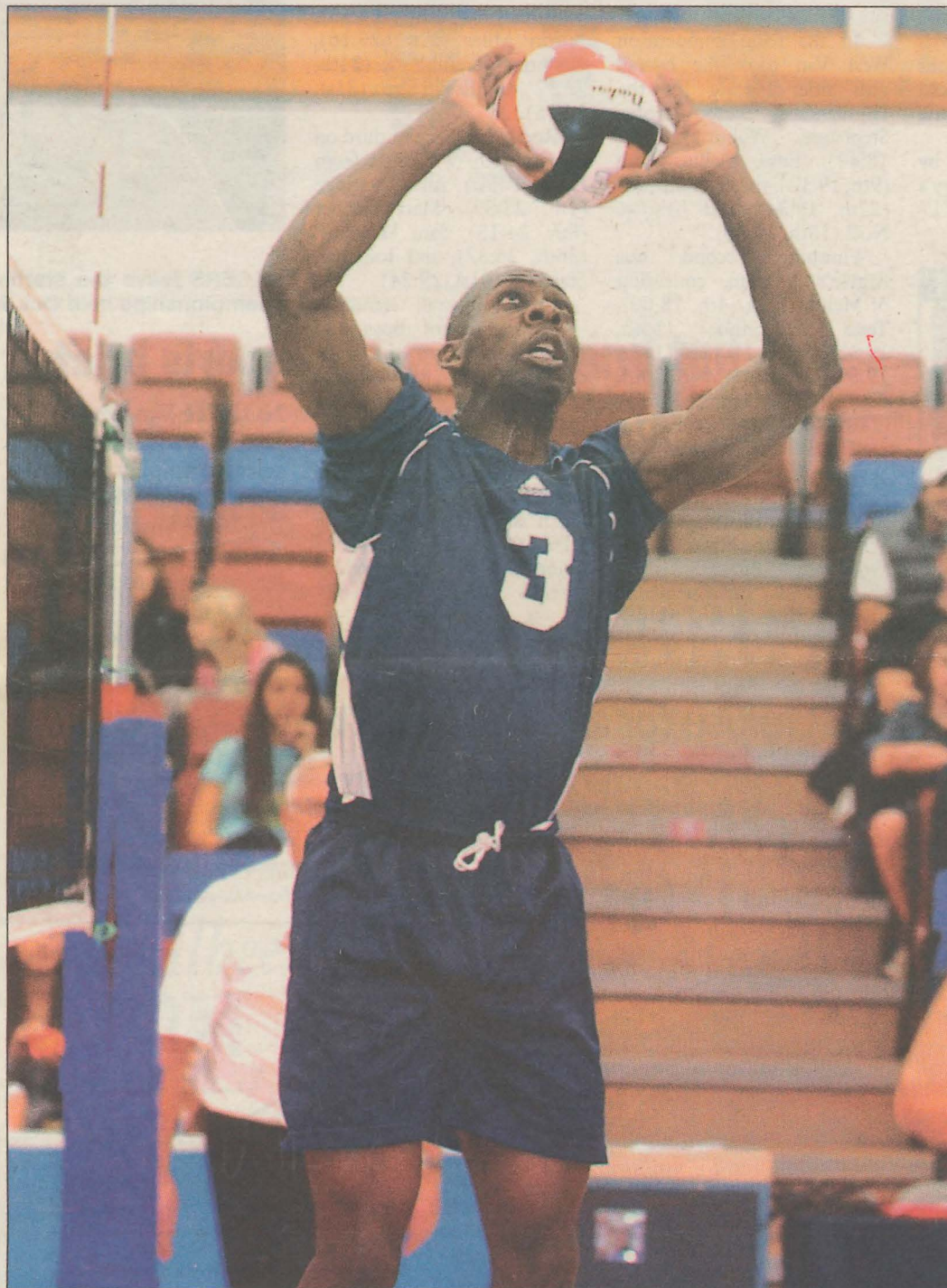
His name is Emmanuel Denguessi and his presence on campus this year has helped give the Blues a new look and new confidence as they prepare to open their regular season with home games this Friday and Saturday.

"Our offense runs like magic when he's playing well," said head coach James Sneddon before a recent practice. "Emmanuel is a very good leader. . . . He cares more about his teammates than about himself and it really helps the rest of the team understand the team concept."

Denguessi, who was voted the top setter at an all-Africa Olympic qualifying tournament in 2003, is 28 years old and was playing volleyball before most of his teammates were born.

"When my big brother brought a volleyball into our home I started to touch it. I remember my first volleyball camp was when I was six years old," Emmanuel said as his teammates warmed up at the Capilano Sportsplex. He came to the North Vancouver school to take English as a second language courses — his primary language is French — and prepare for a transfer next year to a college or university where he can earn a theology and pastoral studies. Volleyball, he says, has given him opportunities that many people in his home country don't have and he hopes to earn a degree so that he can help others experience the same things he has.

"I want to create opportunities for the people in developing countries, poor people



NEWS photo Paul McGrath

NEW Capilano College setter Emmanuel Denguessi makes a play against the Canada Masters in exhibition play earlier this month. Denguessi, a former star of the Cameroonian national team, is at the college to improve his English and help the Blues earn a championship.

especially, to have the opportunities given to me," he said. "For me the most important thing in your life is give your knowledge to other persons. To me it is really special and I love these players (at Capilano) because they understand very well and they are very open to (learning). For me I think it's a blessing to play with this team."

On this day Denguessi is not dressed in volleyball gear like his teammates but rather a stylish black leather jacket and Kangol hat. An injured ankle is keeping him off the court for now but soon he will be back and focused on giving his teammates something more than knowledge before he moves on in a year or two: "A national trophy," he said. "I want to win this year because I know I don't have a long time."

Sneddon said Denguessi's giving attitude is no act.

"Emmanuel is a really unselfish person and he really cares about other people and wants to help his native countrymen improve their lifestyle. He has this great opportunity here, I think he's enjoying it and looking forward to completing his education. It's been a pleasure to have him."

Sneddon first heard of Denguessi when two former Capilano players met the Cameroonian on a beach volleyball court in Montreal in 2004 and passed his name on to their former coach. Denguessi at first resisted coming to Vancouver but this year, with his educational future more in focus, he made the trip to Canada's West Coast and was surprised to find a little of his homeland in North Vancouver.

"The forest looks like Africa," he said, laughing. "I love that. And the people are

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