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Roster filled with freshman, sophomores show promise for Pine-Richland volleyball

By Jerin Steele April 2, 2023



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Youth will be serving for the [Pine-Richland](#) boys volleyball team this spring.

It'll also be hitting, digging, setting and doing pretty much everything on the court.

The Rams will have a lineup made up entirely of freshmen and sophomores who have shown potential as they are adjusting to the speed that comes with playing at the varsity level.

"It was pretty funny (March 28) at [Butler](#) when they were announcing the names and they had six seniors and a junior; meanwhile, we started three freshmen and four sophomores," [Pine-Richland](#) boys volleyball

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They have two returning starters in sophomores Luke Jancy and Matteo Rotelli. Jancy is an outside hitter and Rotelli is a right side hitter/setter.

Freshmen in the rotation are Doolin Stober, a 6-foot-6 middle hitter, Lucio Sherron, a libero, and Ben Ward, an outside hitter.

Sophomores include outside hitter Michael Tunder and middle hitter Brady Weir.

Each one has shown improvement and most of them play at the club level.

Overall there's plenty of optimism across the entire program for Rotelli as he enters his second season as coach.

"I'm very happy with where the team is now," Rotelli said. "We have a wonderful base of young athletes and a great coaching staff. I'm really excited with how our coaching staff has fleshed out. We have a new middle school coach, a new varsity assistant, a strength and conditioning coach, and we have our JV coach returning from last year.

"We have 23 freshman and sophomore athletes across the JV and varsity teams and 22 players in our middle school program. We are still rebuilding and developing, but it's an exciting time."

Outside of taking a set from Butler, the Rams have also achieved some results in a couple of tournaments they've entered. They made the semifinals at [Fox Chapel](#) on March 18. They earned wins over [Central Catholic](#) and [Armstrong](#) before falling to [Mars](#).

Pine-Richland is in an extremely difficult section with perennial power [North Allegheny](#) and another WPIAL favorite [Shaler](#) as well as [Alderdice](#), Butler, [Fox Chapel](#), [North Hills](#), [Seneca Valley](#) and [Shady Side Academy](#).

Rotelli believes the team is in a much better position to compete in the section compared to last year.

"Let me put it this way: ... Last year, it was like a butter knife going up against a tank and this year maybe we've moved on to a steak knife versus a pistol," Rotelli said. "We're getting closer. We can block with these teams and we can hit with these teams, but the consistency, size and strength and speed at which these games happen, we're not quite there yet."

Jerin Steele is a freelance writer