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Panther Sports News

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LS-AS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHARLESTON, IL--Gail Richard was recently named head coach of Eastern Illinois University's women's tennis team.

Richard, 29, will fill the post vacated by Chris Perry, who left EIU to seek a full-time teaching position after directing the women for one season.

Richard, who is entering her third year with Eastern's speech pathology department, inherits a team that tied with Northern Iowa for last place at the first Gateway Collegiate Athletic Conference tournament last May.

Richard played both high school and collegiate tennis and was the No. 1 player at Augustana (IL) College, where she earned a bachelor's degree in 1976.

Although this will be her first head coaching post, Richard has given individual tennis instruction and conducted classes in conjunction with the Davenport (IA) Park Board.

The women's tennis season will not officially open until spring, but Richard has scheduled a few exhibition matches to begin grooming a team this fall.

"Primarily the fall will be for rebuilding, restructuring and reorganizing the program. We should be through that rebuilding and organizing by spring and ready for our conference opponents," she said.

"Primarily, I'm interested in developing each individual's game. My philosophy is to teach aggressive tennis. I prefer not to be a passive, backboard-type player, but to be aggressive and take charge of the match," she added.

Only one player graduated from last year's squad, leaving the first-year coach with a roster laden with sophomores and juniors.

"I'm happy to see that this will be a pretty young team that can be molded and shaped and then be around for another year or two," Richard said.