

Marion knocks, Assumption answers

Written by Ryan Suchomel

Tuesday, 05 November 2013 22:56 - Last Updated Tuesday, 05 November 2013 23:26



TIPTON - No. 10 Marion will have to keep knocking at the door for another year. No. 7 Davenport Assumption showed the Indians how to knock it down, winning 25-22, 25-23, 25-21 Tuesday in a Class 4A regional final.

Assumption (31-6) faces No. 3 West Delaware (36-5) in the 4A state quarterfinal on Tuesday at the U.S. Cellular Center in Cedar Rapids.

The Knights take a senior-dominated team to the state tournament.

It was that senior lineup that never panicked in tight finishes to all three sets.

"All these girls have played volleyball for a long time," Assumption Coach Kyle Condon said. "They've made this run before. Experience comes into play. You don't make as many mental errors."

Marion (25-16) had four juniors and two sophomore in its starting lineup.

"A couple key points didn't go our way at the end," Marion Coach Roxanne Paulsen said. "That's a good team, an experienced team that has won a lot of matches. They did what they needed to do at the end of the matches."

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The first set was tied 20-20, in the second set the Indians were down 23-22, and in the third set Assumption led 21-20. Each time, the Knights closed it out.

"(Having seniors) makes a big difference," Assumption senior Danielle Cabel said. "We have more experience."

Assumption became the aggressor at the end of each game, making the big kills.



Even when Marion sophomore Alyssa Thomas hammered a kill to close within 23-22 in the second set, Cabel came back with a powerful kill, and closed it out one point later with a shot that was dug up into the rafters and then out of play at the Tipton gym.

Paulsen used all her timeouts to try and shift momentum, but couldn't get the Indians on track.

"It just takes time," Paulsen said. "This is a team that has had a lot of success and they believe in that. Sometimes we push and carry a lot of pressure."

Despite having a young team, Marion felt this was their year.

"We heard their defense was off, their hitting was off, and we've been on ... we can do this,"

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junior Taylor Wade said. "We came in expecting an easy win. ... Then it was, oh wait, we're the underdogs."

Marion blew past Davenport North in the regional semifinals 25-17, 25-18, 25-12 and was thinking about state after that win.

But Assumption had been to state a year ago and had that experience to draw on when things got tight.

"Having been at this for awhile, you realize once you (get to state) its a lot easier to get back there," Paulsen said. "Because the kids know what it takes. We have a group of young girls that are right on the edge.

"If we can crack through that and break through ... we'll be one of those teams pushing consistently for that. If you haven't experienced that, its hard to really know what's there, and what it really takes."

Sophomore Alyssa Thomas led Marion with 16 kills. Sophomore Olivia Frazier had five kills and Johanna Steggall and Wade each added three kills.

The Knights had a little more variety of big hits, led by Cabel with a match-best 18 kills. Senior Jamie White had nine kills, senior Claire Bird six kills, sophomore Mary Rolf five kills and senior Mallory Lamb added four kills.

Assumption had big hits at the right times, too. The Knights never let Marion go on runs or lead by more than five points -- and that was 15-10 in the first set.

Marion led 16-15 in each of the first two sets, and then 10-9 in the third set, before surrendering the lead and momentum to the Knights.

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"I think late we probably didn't execute a couple of things that maybe we needed to," Paulsen said. "The placement of serves or couple missed serves. We had a couple people that maybe missed a serve, or served in a spot we weren't looking for.

"When we did put some things down, they answered every one of our hits. Give them credit."

"We really wanted to go to state this year," Wade said. "Put Marion volleyball on the map. It didn't happen."

The Indians lose two seniors, and no front-line hitters.

"We're only gong to get stronger next year," Wade said. "We've got so close two years in a row. We're ready to win now. We've got to win."