

Lueck helps No. 7 Eagles soar

Written by Jim Ecker

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Halle Lueck has been a Kirkwood kid for a long time.

She grew up in the Kirkwood neighborhood as a student in the College Community (Cedar Rapids Prairie) School District. And her mother, Lynn, is the office manager for the Kirkwood athletic department at Johnson Hall, so Halle knows her way around the gym.

Now Lueck is a top-notch athlete at Kirkwood Community College as a prominent member of the seventh-ranked volleyball team. She leads all players in the ICCAC conference in assists and ranks seventh in the nation in Division II, averaging more than 10 assists per set on the team that's filled with heavy hitters.

Lueck had offers from NCAA Division III colleges and from Upper Iowa, an NCAA Division II school, but she was confident Kirkwood was the right place to begin her college experience this year.

"I love it here," the 5-foot-9 freshman said Wednesday night after helping the Eagles crush Clinton Community College, 25-6, 25-15, 25-5. "Kirkwood is a great place. I love the program, I love the school, I like the atmosphere. It's great."

Lueck was a three-sport star at Prairie in volleyball, track and softball, but she's focusing entirely on volleyball in college despite overtures from Kirkwood softball coach Joe Yegge to play two sports for the Eagles.

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"Coach Yegge had asked me if I wanted to, but I just wanted to focus on volleyball," she said. "It would be tough to play two sports."

"I really love softball," she said. "It would have been fun, but I think it would have been too overwhelming. They have fall stuff going on right now, so it would have been hard to do everything. It's crazy enough right now with one sport."

Lueck, a 5-foot-9 setter, has collected 628 assists in 18 matches for Kirkwood (16-2). She has a rich array of hitters to feed with Heather Poula, Erin Wenzel, Megan Allmandinger, Becca Bell, Payton Hilton and Raegan Menke all capable of knocking the air out of the ball.

"It's great having such great hitters," said Lueck. "It's a different thing coming here from high school. Not that I didn't have great hitters in high school, but this is like an even higher level."

Kirkwood Coach Jill Williams put Lueck right in the starting lineup as the main setter.

"She's doing well, to put a freshman in that role," said Williams. "We've got hitters wherever she needs them, so that takes a little pressure off. She's doing a great job with that."

Even though Lueck is playing only one sport these days, she'll still be plenty busy during the school year. She's a member of the work-study program at Kirkwood and will help coach the Prairie club volleyball program with other Kirkwood players.

Lueck plans to spend two years at Kirkwood and then play volleyball at a four-year school. "I'm still looking at Upper Iowa after this, but we'll see how it goes," she said.

Lueck finished with 20 assists and four aces against Clinton, which was overmatched and remained winless for the season. Wenzel had seven kills and Bell had five blocks.