

Richards family excels in volleyball

Written by Jim Ecker

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When it comes to premier volleyball in Cedar Rapids these days, it's hard to top the Richards family and the three talented sisters who are playing at Kirkwood and Xavier.

Madsy Richards, a sophomore at Kirkwood, leads the fourth-ranked Eagles in kills and was named the national junior college player of the week for Sept. 5 through Sept. 11.

Charlotte Richards, a junior at Xavier, leads the sixth-ranked Saints in kills and is one of the top players in the state. And Olivia Richards, a sophomore at Xavier, has helped the Saints win all 15 of their matches this season.

"It's really cool," Madsy Richards said Wednesday night after Kirkwood swept Ellsworth, 25-14, 25-18, 25-18, for its 13th straight victory. "This year both teams are doing really well.

"Xavier is having a phenomenal year and they have a new coach (Austin Filer). I think they're really enjoying that and all the new stuff he brings to the program.

"And at Kirkwood we're doing really well. Our chemistry is really good and we're just taking care of business."

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A fourth sister, Audrey, also played volleyball at Xavier and Kirkwood and is currently a student at Iowa State, although she's not playing volleyball for the Cyclones.

"My dad started us in volleyball when we were little. We all started playing it," Madsy Richards explained. "It's been in the family and we all really enjoy it."

Madsy said her father, Chris, played football at Michigan State. He sits in the stands at Kirkwood with an Eagle hand puppet on his right hand, proudly waving it every time the Eagles score a point, with his wife, Teresa, at his side.

Charlotte and Olivia Richards also attended Wednesday night's meet to cheer for their sister, and Madsy attends as many of Xavier's matches as she can.

Madsy Richards and Alex Miner had 11 kills in Kirkwood's comfortable victory over Ellsworth, giving the Eagles a 14-2 overall record and 3-0 mark in the league. Caiti Peterson rolled up 34 assists, Margaret Micka finished with 15 digs and Miner had four blocks.



The Eagles are really good at "digging" an opponent's best shot. Along with Micka's 15 digs, Morgan Grimm had 14, Jenna Laxton 13, Richards 13 and Peterson 12.

Kirkwood Coach Jill Williams thought her club lacked a little energy at times, but she was not

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totally surprised or disappointed considering what the Eagles accomplished in their own tournament this past weekend. The Eagles defeated four straight ranked teams, topping No. 13 Illinois Central and No. 16 Cowley on Friday and knocking off No. 19 Johnson County and No. 14 McHenry County on Saturday.

Kirkwood climbed from No. 8 in the nation to No. 4 after that performance and Madsy Richards was duly honored as the national player of the week.

"We want to continue to grow, we want to continue to get better, we want to improve on some of the silly mistakes that we've had," said Williams. "We need to minimize those, and on some nights eliminate those."

Kirkwood has dropped only three sets during its 13-match winning streak and has not lost a match since Aug. 27.