

Richards plans double-duty at Kirkwood

Written by Jim Ecker

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Olivia Richards plans to become the fourth member of her family to play volleyball in college, but she's going to do something her three older sisters never tried.

Richards plans to play volleyball and softball at Kirkwood Community College after she graduates from Xavier High School this spring.

She'll become the third member of her family to play volleyball for Coach Jill Williams at Kirkwood. Her sister Audrey played at Kirkwood in 2013 and 2014, then Madsy played for the Eagles in 2015 and 2016. Charlotte did not play at Kirkwood and is currently a freshman at Missouri-St. Louis, where she and Madsy are teammates on the volleyball team.

It's fairly common for talented athletes to play multiple sports in high school, but it's rare for people to play two sports in college because of the time demands. College volleyball is a fall sport, but the Kirkwood softball team practices in the fall as well. The college softball season begins in late winter and extends into the spring, but the volleyball team practices then as well.

"It's going to be hard," Richards acknowledged, but she's excited about the challenge.

Her sisters have told her it could be difficult to play both sports, but have encouraged her to pursue her dreams. "We all grew up playing together," she said. "It's just something that we love to do and don't want to give it up."

Richards has cleared her double-duty at Kirkwood with Williams and new softball coach Eric Frese. At this point, she's not sure if she'll practice with one team while the other season is active.

"If I can mix, I will," she said. "I don't know if the coaches will like it."

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Richards watched her sisters play volleyball at Kirkwood and is looking forward to following their path. "I'm pretty proud and pretty happy about it," she said. "It's a great place to be."

Richards said she likes both sports and is not sure what she'll play at a four-year college after Kirkwood. "It just depends on the timing," she said.

Richards has enjoyed a successful sports career at Xavier. The volleyball team has made three straight trips to the Class 4A state tournament and finished second this past season with a 29-9 record.

The Xavier softball team qualified for the Class 4A state tournament this past summer and posted a 25-16 record after splitting two games at the state meet in Fort Dodge. Richards made the all-tournament team.

Richards collected 205 digs, 148 kills and 38 aces for the Xavier volleyball team this season. She hit .385 with one home run and 33 RBIs for the softball team as a junior. She's been an outfielder and a catcher in high school.

Richards said that Kirkwood softball coach Eric Frese views her primarily as a catcher at this point, but said she'd be happy to play in the outfield as well.