

Allie Hutcheson helps Kennedy sweep Warriors

Written by Jim Ecker

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Allie Hutcheson is 6-foot-1 and a superb athlete, so she probably could have become an excellent basketball player if she had stuck with that sport at Kennedy.

She fell in love with volleyball, however, and has developed into one of the top players in the state, good enough to have received a scholarship from the University of Northern Colorado last October when she was only a junior.

Hutcheson and her teammates were in good form Tuesday night as the fifth-ranked Cougars swept Washington, 25-18, 25-12, 25-20, in a Mississippi Valley Conference match at Kennedy.

Hutcheson, a left-handed setter and outside hitter, collected 25 assists and 13 kills. She had several vicious smashes against the Warriors and fed her teammates for others.

"I think we played great," she said. "We definitely came together. We passed well, we hit well."

Hutcheson made third team all-state last year and could be headed for higher honors this season. She played basketball at Kennedy as a freshman, but focused on volleyball after that.

"Volleyball kind of took over as my favorite sport," she said. "I like the excitement that comes with it and the team stuff. The team is so much closer.

"I like the way the game is played with all the cheering and the excitement of it all."

Kennedy Coach Michelle Goodall thinks Hutcheson is a gifted player.

"She's very talented," Goodall said. "She's a very good communicator, which makes her a great

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setter. She's very wise, as far as matchups."

Hutcheson visited Northern Colorado twice last fall. She was offered a scholarship on her first visit, then went back to make sure it would be the right place for her.

"It felt homey and it felt like somewhere I could really fit in," she said. "I just felt really at home there with the girls."

Goodall said it's not unusual for elite volleyball players to pick a college fairly early, and not unusual for Division I programs to make their offers.

"That's very typical," she said. "They're starting to look at the eighth grade class right now. It's just a crazy scenario."

Hutcheson said college volleyball programs want early commitments from setters in order to build their offense. "It wasn't super early for a setter to commit," she said, "but yeah, it was nice to get it over with."

Goodale thinks Hutcheson is good enough to play at Northern Iowa or Iowa State, two elite programs that are ranked in the Top 25 in the country, but the timing probably wasn't right.

"She's very much good enough for those programs," Goodale said. "I think she was still developing when they were looking."

Goodale said Northern Colorado "found her" and acted quickly.

Hutcheson said she'd like to study secondary education in college and is thinking about becoming a high school math teacher. She's looking forward to having a strong senior year

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with the Kennedy volleyball team and then moving to Greeley, Colo., for college.

"It's beautiful out there," she said.