

## Saints get revenge against Indians

Written by Tom Fruehling

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In the third match of the year between ranked Class 4A Metro teams, Xavier topped Marion Saturday afternoon in the championship bracket consolation round of the Westside Volleyball Invitational at Cedar Rapids Jefferson.

Powerhouse Dike-New Hartford won the 21-team tournament by going 4-0 and beating Dubuque Hempstead in the finals, 25-17, 25-19.

Along with Linn-Mar, which lost to DNH in the semifinals, Xavier and Marion both went 2-0 in the morning pool play to advance into the championship bracket.

The Saints (ranked No.4 in Class 4A at 23-8) lost to Dubuque Hempstead 2-0 in the quarterfinals, and the Indians (No.11 in Class 4A at 21-12) fell to Dowling Catholic of West Des Moines.

Hempstead is ranked No.3 in Class 5A, while Dowling is ranked No.7 in 5A.

Xavier and Marion met before earlier in the year when they split two matches at the Indians' invitational tournament. The Saints won the first match in pool play, but Marion beat them in the finals.

"We wanted revenge," said Saints star Kayla Torson. "We did not like losing to them. And we knew it would be a very high-emotion game."

In the end, Xavier won 25-21, 25-22. Both games were close most of the way.

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With outside hitters Torson and Madsy Richards providing much of the firepower, the Saints pulled out to a 17-11 lead in the second set. The Indians rallied, however, behind some big spikes by Alyssa Thomas.

They came within two points at 23-21, but a kill by Torson sealed the win.

Both Coach Roxanne Paulsen of Marion and Krista Johnson of Xavier were pleased with their teams' performance in an elite meet with nine ranked teams.

"Going 3-1 in this field is pretty good," said Johnson. "And it's more fun when you end the tournament with a win. I didn't breathe against Marion until we got to 25 points."

The Saints' only loss of the day was to Hempstead, and Johnson said her team had trouble with Hempstead's big outside hitters.

"We tried to change our defense," she said. "But that only seemed to be frustrating for our girls. You can't make mistakes against a good team, and we made too many mistakes."

Marion started out with two wins, then lost the last two. But Paulsen said competing in such a strong field will help in postseason play.

"We played some really good teams," she said. "We're a pretty young team, so playing these kind of teams will help us get better. It shows us what we need to do to get to a higher level."

Losing to Dowling, she said, was a learning experience.

"They play a fast-tempo game," Paulsen pointed out. "We haven't seen much of that. It forced us to step up and push ourselves."

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Players and coaches from both Xavier and Marion hope they meet again one more time this season. Since they're in separate regionals, they could only face each other next if they make it to the state tournament.