

On Cedar Rapids Xavier Volleyball Senior Night, the eight upperclassmen on the 11-woman squad were determined to go out on a high note.

"This was our last regular-season home game," outside hitter Kasey Vanden Bosch said after the Saints throttled Prairie, 3-0. "It made it a little bit more special."

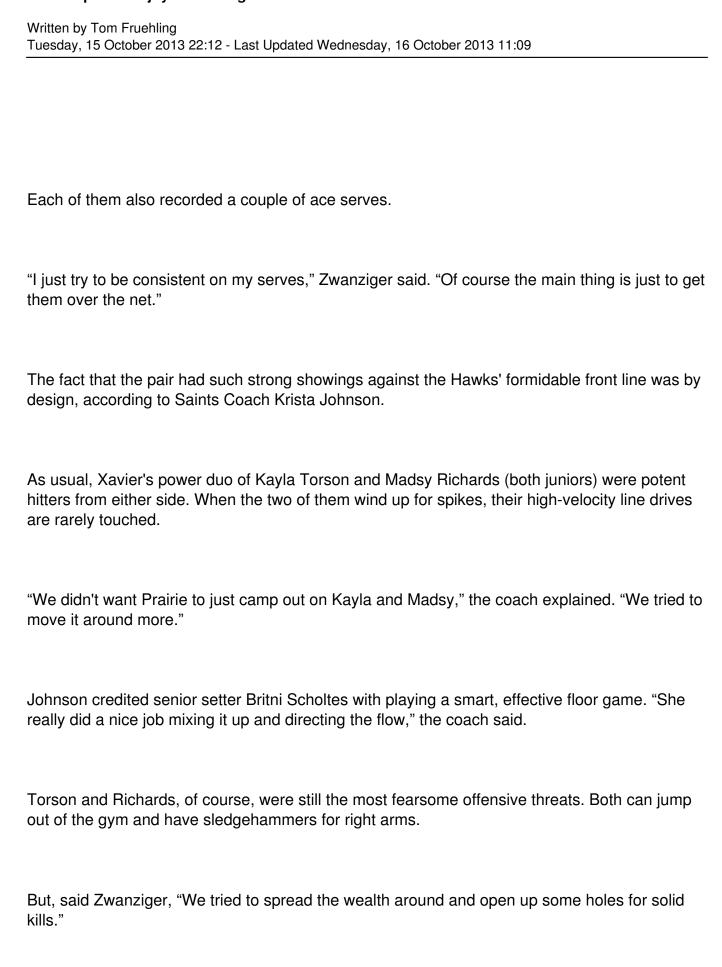
Fellow senior and middle blocker Kara Zwanziger agreed.

"We knew Prairie was good. They've beaten some good teams," she said. "But we came out with a lot of energy, and I thought we kept up our energy all the way."

Both girls were solid at the net all night.

Besides taking the brunt of blocks on Prairie's twin tower sisters Meghan and Kaitlyn Busswitz, they picked up more than their usual share of kills. Vanden Bosch notched eight of them for the night and Zwanziger seven.

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In the first set, Torson started off with straight kills to give Xavier a 5-1 edge. She didn't let up, driving the Saints to a 22-15 lead.

A kill by Kaitlyn Busswitz and two more from Rachael Butz cut the margin to 23-20, however, and Malia Gudenkauf pulled her team to within one at 24-23. A big shot by Vanden Bosch, though, preserved the 25-23 squeaker.

Still, Vanden Bosch said, "they gave us a run for our money."

Her coach expected no less. "Prairie is really scrappy," Johnson pointed out, "and their tall girls kind of took us out of our offense.

"I thought we made far too many errors in the first game. But we calmed down and stayed composed. We played well together as a team with high energy."

With Saints senior libero Halley Heying serving (and scoring two aces), Xavier built a 21-9 lead in the second set. A kill by Richards finished it at 25-15.

The Hawks kept the third game close for awhile, but Zwanziger's two kills put the Saints ahead by five and Richards hit four more spikes to end the match at 25-19.

For the night, Torson had 14 kills and Richards 12.

Vanden Bosch said everyone on the team contributed to the victory.

"We were all flying all over the court," she said. "We kept pushing, and we were winning some long rallies."

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Johnson said her senior-laden squad also looked like it was having a good time. "We play better," she said, "when we're having fun."

The Mississippi Valley Conference tournament will be held at Cedar Falls this Saturday.