

## Moms helped these Saints love volleyball

Written by Jim Ecker

Tuesday, 06 November 2012 23:02 -

---

Sarah Homan and Kelsey Boyer are excited about playing for the Xavier Saints at the state volleyball tournament Wednesday night at the Cedar Rapids Ice Arena.

They began playing the game in grade school and have come a long way as athletes. And they both expressed similar thoughts Tuesday before practice.

Thanks, mom.

Their mothers played volleyball themselves and taught their daughters how to play the game. Laurie Love-Homan played at Britt High School. Lori Boyer played at Mount Vernon High School and Loras College.

"We call them the Lories," Kelsey Boyer said with a smile.

Or maybe it should be the Lauries. In any case, they got their daughters started and pointed them in the right direction.

"I think she played a big role," Sarah Homan said. "She was the first person to teach me how to set. She's always been an encouragement to me and my friends."

The two Lories (Lauries) often sit together at Xavier's matches. "I'll probably be looking for them," Kelsey Boyer remarked.

"She's the one who encouraged me to play and helped me," Boyer said.

The ninth-ranked Saints (26-11) will face top-ranked Charles City (42-1) in the quarterfinals of

## Moms helped these Saints love volleyball

Written by Jim Ecker

Tuesday, 06 November 2012 23:02 -

---

the Class 4A tournament at 6 p.m. Wednesday at the Ice Arena.

The rankings and records seem to favor Charles City, but that might be misleading. Xavier played a steady stream of bigger Class 5A teams in the Mississippi Valley Conference this season and sailed through its Class 4A regional.

"I think we're ready with how we played all season," Boyer said. "And I think playing the 5A teams will help us. It's like we have a new record. We have a clean slate."

The Saints are the lowest-ranked team in the Class 4A field, which is loaded with No. 1 Charles City, No. 2 Bishop Heelan, No. 3 Harlan, No. 4 Waverly-Shell Rock, No. 5 North Scott, No. 6 Solon and No. 8 West Delaware.

Xavier Coach Barb Sullivan knows the Class 4A field will be highly competitive and not necessarily any softer than the Class 5A bracket.

"Absolutely," she remarked. "Teams like Charles City, like Heelan, like West Delaware, like Solon ... They have great programs and a long history of doing very well. So we know it's going to be a tough road."

Xavier reached the state semifinals in 2010 in Class 4A, which at the time was the largest class in the state. The Saints defeated Waukee in the opening round before losing to Ankeny, a school with three times as many students.

That tournament was held at the U.S. Cellular Center. This tournament is being held at the Cedar Rapids Ice Arena, a cozier facility on the southwest side of town.

Homan played for Xavier at the 2010 state tournament at the U.S. Cellular Center as a sophomore and watched the 2011 tournament at the Ice Arena.

## Moms helped these Saints love volleyball

Written by Jim Ecker

Tuesday, 06 November 2012 23:02 -

---

"I like the U.S. Cellular Center a lot, but going to the Ice Arena I loved how close the fans were to the game, and they get to experience a lot of it with the players," she said.

Homan is the only Saint who has played in the state tournament before. She remembers battling some nerves two years ago.

"I definitely remember them," she said. "It feels like so long ago."

She's looking forward to ending her prep career at another state tournament and thinks she's better prepared to succeed. "I don't know if it's necessarily easier," she remarked. "I think I'm just going into it with more confidence."

Homan leads Class 4A in assists with 976 and ranks seventh overall in the state. She's also been extremely accurate with her serves, hitting 270 of 281 for 96.1 percent with 10 aces.

Boyer is also a very accurate server, connecting on 263 of 275 for 94.3 percent with 22 aces. "That's like my favorite part of the game," she said. "I used to be a hitter, but then I stopped growing. So I use my arm swing on my serves."

Boyer stands 5-foot-5 and Homan is 5-foot-6. Both players are relatively short for volleyball players, but they've excelled nonetheless.

Their next assignment will be on the biggest stage of the year.

"I'm more excited than nervous," Boyer said. "I think when I step on the court I'll be a little nervous, but you have to learn to control them."

## Moms helped these Saints love volleyball

Written by Jim Ecker

Tuesday, 06 November 2012 23:02 -

---

Sullivan thinks it could be a tight match between two good teams.

"We've talked about the fact that this could easily go five games," she said. "We're very evenly matched teams. They run a very similar offense to what we do.

"Their team makeup seems to be very similar to us. It's almost like looking in a mirror sometimes when we watch film."

Homan has been a steady leader and a calming influence on the Saints all season. Now comes the biggest tournament of the year.

"I'm excited to get out there and play, but at the same time I don't want to psych myself out," she said. "I'm trying to stay relaxed and calm for the game."

If the Saints defeat Charles City, they'll face North Scott or Waverly-Shell Rock in the semifinals Friday at 1:45 p.m. The finals will be held Saturday at noon.