

## No. 8 Eagles spike Grand View JV

Written by Jim Ecker

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The Kirkwood Eagles did not look like the No. 8 college volleyball team in the country Wednesday night when they dropped the opening set to the Grand View junior varsity, but there was nothing to worry about.

The eighth-ranked Eagles rebounded for a 23-25, 25-14, 25-12, 25-15 victory in the season opener at Johnson Hall.

"We bounced back from that first set really well," said Coach Jill Williams, who liked the way her team performed in the last three sets.

Kirkwood returns five starters from a team that finished seventh at the NJCAA Division II national tournament last year. Williams also brought in eight new freshmen, giving the Eagles a nice blend of youth and experience.

"I do see good things for this group," she said. "I like the chemistry of the team. It's a good mix of personalities. There's a lot of athleticism."

Williams called a timeout after the Eagles fell behind, 9-4, in the first set. They never fully recovered in the opening game, but they got better as the night went along.

"They may have been over-anxious," she said. "They've been going at it since August 1st."

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We've had a couple of scrimmages in there, but this was our first competition today. I just think they were excited to get it going."

Williams wants to see the Eagles get off to a faster start in future matches.

"Out of the gate, we have to be better," she said. "This is our home court. I do think we need to come out and execute, because another team is going to take advantage of that. They're going to execute and we might not find a way back in."

Madsy Richards, a sophomore from Xavier High School, helped point the Eagles in the right direction after the slow start. She finished with a team-best 11 kills and also had 11 digs, five block assists and four aces.

"She's made some really big strides from last year," said Williams. "A lot of growth from her on the outside."



Caiti Peterson collected 37 assists and 14 digs for Kirkwood. Alex Miner had 10 kills and Alexa Whipple had nine kills. Jenna Laxton contributed 15 digs.