

Kirkwood sweeps to top of ICCAC

Written by Jim Ecker
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The Kirkwood Eagles made quick work of their match against Southeastern Community College Wednesday night in a showdown for the ICCAC lead.

The No.7 Eagles swept the 13th-ranked Blackhawks, 25-14, 25-16, 25-22, in a contest that lasted only 70 minutes at Johnson Hall.

Kirkwood moved into sole possession of the ICCAC lead with a 4-0 record. Southeastern, which began the night with an impressive 21-2 overall mark, fell to 3-1 in the league.

"I came into it prepared for a tough five-set match," said Kirkwood Coach Jill Williams. "We came out definitely ready to go in sets one and two."

Payton Hilton, a 5-foot-11 freshman from Union High School in LaPorte City, had a series of kills in the first set as the Eagles (13-4) took command early.

"It was clicking," said Hilton, who helped Union finish second in the Class 3A state tournament last year. "I just had the opportunity and I tried to put the ball down."

Hilton's kill shots made it 11-3, 12-3, 15-3 and 16-4 as Kirkwood ran away with the first game.

"Payton went OFF early," exclaimed Williams. "I thought, 'Let's keep feeding her until they get a stop.' She really did a nice job."

Amber Timmins, a sophomore from LeMars Gehlen Catholic, kept feeding Hilton as long as the

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offense was clicking. "Throughout the rallies, you find one or two things that are going well," noted Timmins.

Kirkwood was clinging to a 14-13 lead in the second set, but a kill shot by Erin Walker ignited a 7-0 run as the Eagles spurred to a commanding 21-13 advantage. Heather Poula served an ace to win the second game, 25-16.

Kirkwood had to rally from an 18-16 deficit in the third set, but consecutive kills by Poula and Chelsea Gryp helped turn things around. Alicen Wintermote finished the straight-set victory with a kill shot for the final point.

The Eagles played one of their best overall matches of the season.

"We knew what we were up against," said Timmins, who finished with 29 assists. "It was our home court. We didn't want to lose."

Hilton and Wintermote led a typically balanced attack with nine kills apiece. Poula had seven kills and Gryp finished with six.

Cali Beyer collected 15 digs. Erin Walker had 14 digs and Poula had 12. Wintermote and Poula led the blocking at the net.