

Kirkwood volleyball team sweeps opener

Written by Jim Ecker

Thursday, 23 August 2018 04:52 -



Volleyball players come and go at Kirkwood Community College with the passage of time, but one thing remains the same with the Eagles.

Consistency.

Kirkwood has been a consistent national power and conference juggernaut under Coach Jill Williams for more than a decade with a steady influx of talented players who know how to play the game.

"We have a philosophy, we have a style," said Williams, beginning her 14th season at Kirkwood. "And obviously in our recruiting, we try to find kids that we think can fit into what we do."

"Some of it has to be adjusted, according to the players we get," she continued. "That's the fun we have on the sideline, how we put together our game plan."

The Eagles began the 2018 season Wednesday night by sweeping the Grand View junior varsity, 25-16, 25-22, 25-15, at Johnson Hall with a typically balanced attack.

"It's always nice to get the first one in the 'W' column, especially at home," said Williams. "That's a lot of pressure: First week of school, all the students are back."

"We've been doing our own thing in practice for three weeks. Now there's people around us. And I just hoped there's not a case of stage fright. I think they did a great job coming out ready to play."

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Kirkwood had to make an adjustment before the match began when Taylor Carey, a 6-foot-1 freshman from Waukee who has been pushing for playing time, twisted her ankle during pre-game drills and was unable to perform, but the Eagles never blinked.

Haleigh Durnin led Kirkwood with 10 kills, with Abbi Tunis collecting eight kills, Alexa Ingram seven, Maddie Huff five, Sami Johnson four and Lauren Keane two.

Keane rolled up 30 assists in three games. Keane and Ingram had 10 digs apiece, with Hannah Huss and Johnson contributing eight. Tunis participated in four blocks at the net.

The Eagles have nine freshmen and six sophomores on the roster. Ingram, a 5-foot-8 sophomore from Iowa City High, played at Drake last year and appears to be an excellent addition to the program.

"I might have stretched her at 5-foot-8. She might be 5-foot-7," joked Williams. "She gets up great.

"She's a very nice player. We're excited to have her."

Keane, Durnin, Tunis, libero Maddie Lavenz and Brittiney Harris are the other sophomores on the club. All the other players are college rookies.

Williams liked the way her team played in the season opener.

"I was happy with it," she said. "There's a lot of room for growth with this team. I think we got to see some chemistry building out there and I thought that was a good first start."

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Kirkwood will be competing in the Waubensee Tournament in Sugar Grove, Ill., on Friday and Saturday in the western Chicago suburbs.