

Mustangs eye Heart volleyball crown

Written by Metro Sports Report
Saturday, 06 April 2019 06:15 -



DES MOINES - Mary Kay Van Oort and the Mount Mercy Mustangs raked in some of the top honors on the Heart of America all-conference men's volleyball team on Friday.

Now Van Oort and the Mustangs are looking to capture top honors at the conference tournament and punch their ticket to the NAIA national meet.

The eighth-ranked Mustangs swept Clarke, 25-23, 25-22, 25-17, in the semifinals of the conference tournament Friday afternoon and will face fourth-ranked Grand View in the finals Saturday afternoon.

The tournament champion will earn an automatic spot in the national tournament. The runner-up could get an at-large bid to the national meet, depending on how the other conference tournaments unfold.

Van Oort was named the Coach of the Year in the Heart of America Conference after the Mustangs tied Grand View for the regular-season championship in just the third year of the program's existence.

Strahil Svilenki was named first team all-conference. Evan Gaskill, Ben Steffen and Nikola Stoimenov were named second team all-conference. Andrew Colantone was named the Setter of the Year.

Julian Armendano led the Mustangs (22-7) with 10 kills against Clarke. Stoimenov had nine kills, Steffen eight, Svilenki eight and Gaskill seven in a balanced attack.

Colantone collected 32 assists. Stoimenov, Armendano and Gaskill had four digs.

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Grand View and Mount Mercy split their two matches during the regular season. The Mustangs upset Grand View in Des Moines early in the season when the Vikings were ranked No. 1 in the country. Now they'll be meeting again on Grand View's home court.