

No. 9 Lions trim Cougars in marathon

Written by Jim Ecker

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Ellie Anderson loves volleyball so much that she plays the sport 12 months of the year.

She plays sand volleyball, club volleyball, USA volleyball and high school volleyball for the Linn-Mar Lions.

"It's so fun," she said Tuesday night. "It gets me going. I love it.

"I love setting up my teammates," she said. "When they get a kill I go crazy."

Anderson led a balanced attack Tuesday as the ninth-ranked Lions trimmed Kennedy in a five-set marathon, 19-25, 25-20, 21-25, 25-21, 15-10 in a Mississippi Valley Conference match at Linn-Mar.

Anderson, a 5-foot-7 sophomore, was all over the court with her jump serves, digs, assists and kills at the net.

"An all-around outstanding player. Absolutely," said Linn-Mar Coach Teresa Kehe. "She has great timing. She's just a tremendous athlete."

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Anderson was invited to compete in the USA Volleyball High Performance Championships in Tulsa, Okla., this July, one of only 33 elite players from around the country to receive that honor.

"It was fun. It was a great experience," she said.

Anderson played a strong all-around match Tuesday, but the Lions got important contributions throughout the lineup. The kills were evenly distributed with Emilee McGowan collecting 12, Abby McGowan 11 and Sami Boekhoff 10.

Saran Renner finished with 28 assists and seven blocks. Boekhoff had five blocks.

"We had kids stepping up all over and kids figuring it out and learning," said Kehe.

Kennedy (2-2) was playing its fourth match of the season after going 2-1 in the MVC/MAC Challenge last week, but Linn-Mar (1-0) was playing its first contest of the year.

The Cougars enjoyed a 2-1 lead after three sets before the Lions rallied to win the final two sets.

"We have to figure out our roles right now and develop that consistency," said Kehe. "Until you get on that court you really never know what you're going to find, especially at the beginning of the year like this.

"That's what so concerned me, the fact that they (the Cougars) had so much under their belt already and we didn't, but that's how the schedule goes."

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Kehe said she does not put much stock in her club being ranked No. 9 in Class 5A at this point.

"It's a nice honor, but now are you going to defend that or step up to the occasion?," she remarked. "If they're going to think that of you, what are you going to do in response?"

If Linn-Mar is No. 9, then Kennedy is not far behind. The young Cougars also played well without a single senior on the court all night.

Anna Fluent finished with 11 kills and 42 assists. Macy Anderson also collected 11 kills. Brinley Milbrath and Paige Franck had 10 kills. Tianna Drahn contributed 24 digs.