

Renner helps Lions sweep J-Hawks

Written by Jim Ecker

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Sarah Renner was playing for her club volleyball team at a tournament in Omaha last winter when Sally Polhamus, the new head coach at Georgia State, stopped and took a serious look at the 5-foot-11 outside hitter from Linn-Mar.

Polhamus liked what she saw.

"She was walking down the court and saw me playing and decided that she was interested," Renner related Tuesday night. "I went on a visit. And that was that, I guess."

Renner toured the Georgia State campus in Atlanta last March, was offered a scholarship while she was there and accepted a few days later on St. Patrick's Day.

That relieved all the pressure of trying to find a good place to play in college and has allowed Renner to relax and enjoy her final year at Linn-Mar.

Renner and the Lions looked good Tuesday night as they swept Jefferson, 25-12, 25-12, 25-16, and kept Jefferson star Amanda Ollinger under wraps for the most part at Linn-Mar.

Renner acknowledged that moving all the way from Cedar Rapids to a major city like Atlanta is a little intimidating. "But I'd say it's a good kind of intimidating," she remarked. "It's a challenge.

"I couldn't be more excited. It will be something new, like a new adventure. I knew that I wanted to play in college. It's great that it works out."

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Renner said she was the first high school junior to visit Georgia State after Polhamus became the head coach last winter, the first to be offered a scholarship and the first to accept. Renner said she really enjoyed her trip to Atlanta and knew she wanted to go there.

"I got to see everything, meet everybody," she said. "It was crazy. It was a quick visit."

Linn-Mar (15-5) has a strong team this year with a balanced attack. It was more of the same Tuesday against Jefferson.

Renner had 14 assists and four blocks. Meg Gostonczik had 12 kills. Ellie Anderson collected 21 assists and 10 kills. Sam Boekhoff had seven kills and five blocks. Abby Dennis contributed nine digs.

Linn-Mar Coach Teresa Kehe said Renner has made great improvement this season.

"She's grown leaps and bounds from last year," said Kehe. "She has strong hands on the sets and does a really good job of blocking."

"That's a highlight for us, getting up against some really strong outside hitters. She's just a tremendous athlete."

Ollinger, one of the most fearsome hitters in the state, finished with 14 kills against the Lions but was not able to dominate the match.

"We were trying to give them things to throw them out of system so they couldn't get her the ball as easily," Kehe explained. "We were trying to make sure we were on the offensive and on the attack so they had to struggle to get it to her."

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"We knew she was going to get her kills," said Kehe. "We had to handle it with composure when she did get them."

Renner and Ollinger were teammates on the Club Iowa team that won a national title in Minneapolis this past summer, so Renner had a good scouting report on the 6-foot-2 junior.

"I know how she hits and stuff like that," said Renner. "She's a great hitter, and so I knew she'd be crafty and know how to go around us."

Kehe liked the way her team performed.

"I thought our ball control really stepped up from where we have been," she said. "We kind of faltered a little bit heading into the meet tonight. I really thought our ball control was really an important part."