

No. 19 Eagles rally past No. 11 Tritons

Written by Jim Ecker

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The Kirkwood women's volleyball team could be on the verge of borrowing the same script that last year's club followed during a bumpy ride.

If so, the 2019 season could have the same happy ending.

The 19th-ranked Eagles rallied to hand 11th-ranked Iowa Central its first loss in the ICCAC Conference this year with a determined 24-26, 25-18, 29-31, 25-18, 15-9 comeback victory in an entertaining match at Johnson Hall.

Just like last year, this year's team has experienced a bunch of ups and downs and probably will not win the league title. And perhaps just like last year, this year's team might get hot at the right time and make a long run in the national tournament.

The Eagles finished fourth at nationals last year. They've already defeated top-ranked Parkland this year despite a few disappointing performances, so maybe they'll make their mark when the postseason tournaments begin Nov. 2.

Can the Eagles make another run? "I hope so," said sophomore Taylor Carey. "We will!"

Carey is one of only five sophomores at Kirkwood this season, along with 10 freshmen, so she knows what's possible if the Eagles stick together and have a positive attitude.

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"Our record may not show it, but we're ready to play and we're a really good team," she said. "We're such a great team and we can really play with anyone when we put our minds to it. We're not worried."

Kirkwood is 19-9 overall and 3-3 in the conference. That's not bad, but Coach Jill Williams always has high expectations for her program and knows the Eagles have let a few matches slip away this season.

Not Wednesday, even though the Eagles squandered numerous opportunities when they let that third set against Iowa Central slip away 31-29 in overtime.

They stormed back by winning the last two sets with emphasis.

"I really felt good about our energy," said Williams. "Our confidence showed up again tonight.

"We've spent time in the last week talking about our identity. We keep talking about total effort, and with that comes confidence."

Anna Gorsich led the Kirkwood attack with 22 kills and 16 digs. Abbie Ericson had 11 kills, Carey 10, Aubrin Dittmer nine and Peyton Brokovich eight.

Maranda Wheelock made 20 digs. Olivia Richards, who missed the past few weeks with a sprained ankle, returned to action and contributed 16 digs, four aces and stability in the back row.

"It was great to have Olivia back out there," said Williams. "She's a go-getter."

Madi Wagaman had 15 digs. Ericson blocked seven shots.

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Iowa Central fell into a three-way tie for first place in the conference with Northeast and NIACC at 5-1. The Tritons are 23-4 overall.