

KCC volleyball adds 3 Metro players

Written by Jim Ecker
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Kirkwood volleyball coach Jill Williams likes to search locally for new players whenever she can.

This year was no exception.

Williams has signed nine new players for the 2013 season and all of them are in-state recruits. "We are all Iowa," she said proudly.

Three of the players come from the Metro area with Audrey Richards of Xavier, Bre Boote of Kennedy and Becca Bell of Prairie.

"Those are three quality players off of three solid programs. I think that's the kicker," said Williams.

"It's good to see that Metro kids are finding that Kirkwood is a good fit for their athletic careers as well as their academics and it's a good choice for them."

The Eagles finished 40-9 last season and placed ninth at the NJCAA DII national tournament. "We're competing against the top of the nation with mostly local Iowa kids," said Williams.

Williams also has signed Rachel Kuempker of Holy Trinity, Heather Poula of West Branch, Payton Hilton of Union, Jasmine Jackson of Des Moines Lincoln, Abbey Roete of Oelwein and Megan Paustian of Pleasant Valley.

Hilton was named second team all-state and helped Union placed second in the Class 3A state

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tournament in 2012. Paustian received honorable mention all-state and helped Pleasant Valley finish second in the Class 5A state tournament.

Kuemper was third team all-state and helped Holy Trinity reach the Class 1A semifinals. Poula received honorable mention all-state on the West Branch club that made the state tournament.

Jackson was named the Female Athlete of the Year at Des Moines Lincoln.

The Eagles have added good size with Bell (6-foot-1), Kuempker (6-0), Hilton (5-11), Paustian (5-11), Poula (5-10), Jackson (5-9 1/2), Boote (5-9) and Richards (5-8).

"We did add some height in there," said Williams. "It's going to be a different look. Last year going in, I knew we were undersized, but I also knew we were really athletic."

Williams thinks the new players are athletic and big, which is a good combination.

"I think we're pretty solid," she said. "I think it will be a solid group and it will be exciting to add them with our returnees and see what we can do."

Lexi Litts and Ashley Gonzalez, two of the top players on this year's team at Kirkwood, plan to continue their volleyball careers at Newman University in Wichita, Kan. Litts is a Kennedy graduate.