

Walker helps No.9 Eagles whip NIACC

Written by Jim Ecker

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Erin Walker does a little bit of everything for the Kirkwood Community College volleyball team. And she does it well.

Walker leads the ninth-ranked Eagles in aces, ranks second in kills and is tied for second in digs. Her versatility is one of the reasons Kirkwood has rolled to a 28-6 record this season and has a shot at making the national tournament again.

"She's explosive. And she's got speed," Kirkwood Coach Jill Williams said Wednesday night. "I like her ability to move wherever she's at on the court and then turn it into the next play."

Walker collected nine kills and eight digs Wednesday as the Eagles made quick work of NIACC, 25-10, 25-18, 25-14, in a 55-minute match at Johnson Hall on Kirkwood's Cedar Rapids campus.

Walker, a sophomore from Silvis, Ill., is not tall for an outside hitter at 5-foot-8, but she has excellent jumping ability and good timing.

The top of the volleyball net at center court is 7 feet, 4 1/8 inches off the ground. When Walker jumps and extends her arms, she's more than 2 feet higher than that when she slams the ball.

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"The last I remember it was 9-foot-5," she said. "I hope it's gotten higher since then. That was about two years ago."

Walker said she got her jumping ability from her father, Eric, whom she described as a former track star.

Walker is the only out-of-state player on the Kirkwood roster this season. Twelve women are on the team, and all except Walker are from Iowa. Her home in Illinois is not far from the border, however.

"We're like 10 minutes from the Mississippi River, if that," she said.



Walker played club volleyball for Platform Elite in Davenport and her club volleyball coach helped steer her to the Eagles. "He's the one who hooked me up with Kirkwood," she said. "Otherwise I hadn't really heard of them before."

Walker has made a name for herself at Kirkwood. She was named second-team All-Region last year as a player and first-team All-Region as a student. An education major, she'd like to become a teacher or counselor and hopes to play volleyball at a four-year college next year.

For now, she's helping Kirkwood compete for the conference title and prepare for the postseason tournament. The Eagles soared Wednesday.

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"I think we played pretty well," said Walker. "I think we did a good job capitalizing on their errors. I think we're getting a lot better. We're working hard every day."

The Eagles raised their ICCAC record to 8-1 as they continue to battle DMACC for the regular-season title.

Heather Poula led Kirkwood with 10 kills. Payton Hilton and Walker had nine apiece, Chelsea Gryp eight and Alicen Wintermote six.

Amber Timmins collected 31 assists. Cali Beyer and Gryp had nine digs.

NIACC fell to 14-17 overall and 1-7 in the league.