

## Eagles drop showdown with DMACC

Written by Jim Ecker

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Kirkwood's hopes of winning the conference volleyball title suffered a severe jolt Wednesday night.

The 15th-ranked Eagles were swept by No. 7 DMACC, 25-21, 25-19, 25-17, in an ICCAC match at Johnson Hall.

The DMACC Bears took sole possession of the conference lead with a 6-1 record with one match left in the league campaign. Kirkwood fell to 5-2 and could still tie for the league title, but needs help.

The Eagles battled the Bears on near-even terms for most of each set, but faltered down the stretch each time.

"We scored against them," said Kirkwood Coach Jill Williams. "I'm not going to roll over and say they're head and shoulders above us, but they were consistent and they bounced back."

DMACC has two All-Americans on its team with Taylor Case and Shelby Schouten, but the balanced Bears did not rely solely on their superstars. They got contributions up and down the lineup and appeared to be a little stronger than Kirkwood with kills, blocks, digs and unforced errors.

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"They've got sophomores back in key roles. They've got some balance," said Williams.

"We had them where we wanted them, and we erred. We mis-served. We didn't capitalize on opportunities when we had a chance to seize the moment."

Kirkwood has 12 freshmen and only three sophomores on its team, but Williams refuses to use youth as an excuse.

"Youth now has experience," she remarked. "They've seen the league, and we're playing against opponents that have young players too."

Kirkwood fell to 23-11 overall. DMACC raised its record to 24-6. The Eagles play in the Illinois Central Tournament this weekend and will finish the conference season next Wednesday night against Northeast (Neb.).

Williams does not plan any major changes in the team at this stage of the season.

"I think we need to do what we do," she said. "We need to do it better, longer. I feel fine."