

SPORTS
PREPS
VOLLEYBALL STATE FINALS

CLASS 4A WAYZATA 3, EAST RIDGE 1

Wayzata caps 34-0 season with title

With dominating depth of talent, the Trojans have won 54 matches in a row

By JIM ILLIEN
jillien@startribune.com

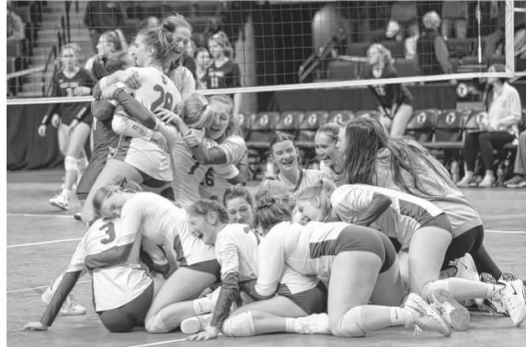
Wayzata closed out a season that can only be called one of the best in state history with a five-set, 25-21, 25-17, 23-25, 25-19 victory over East Ridge on Saturday in the state volleyball tournament's Class 4A championship match.

The Trojans finished 34-0 for the season and have won 54 consecutive matches since 2007 when they were the first large-school championship.

"And how about this one? 53 in a row best-of-five. We haven't lost a five-set match since 2013," said Wayzata coach Scott Jackson.

Amy Powell led four Wayzata hitters in double figures in kills with 14. Stella Swenson had a whopping 55 set assists and there Ella Voegtle had 22 digs and 15 serve aces.

"Amy had her best match of the season for us," Jackson said. "And Stella was the real star always in. Two supermoes making all kinds of plays. We're excited about the future with those guys."



Wayzata players hugged and piled onto one another after capping an undefeated season with a victory over East Ridge in the Class 4A championship match. JEFF LAURIE - Star Tribune

East Ridge, making its first state tournament appearance since 2010, finished 23-16. Outside hitter Britt Carlson had 13 kills and Cam Greenwald added 10.

As it has all season, Wayzata had to withstand an early onslaught from its first-set opponent.

East Ridge built a 6-4 lead in the first set with setter

Marcy Spoldiro setting four different players for early kills.

But Wayzata calmly worked its way back and earned a close 25-22 victory.

"I think it gave us a little motivation, honestly," Carlson said. "We just weren't able to pull through."

The Trojans then turned to the thing that makes them

special: their wealth of talent. Ella Voegtle and Sophia Johnson dug and passed with precision and setter Stella Swenson deftly managed their exceptional collection of front-row hitters.

The Trojans controlled the second set. They ransly let East Ridge have more than two points in a row and took

a 2-0 lead with a 25-17 victory.

"We believe in each other," Voegtle said. "We know what each other can do. That's why we're good. We can't think we're not handled things."

East Ridge came out in the third set with renewed purpose, winning 25-23. It was just the seventh set the Trojans lost all season.

East Ridge had lost to Wayzata in three sets early in the season.

"That was a completely different team, even from the semifinals that we watched," Jackson said. "All of his players nodding in agreement. They really came at us from the outside. It's more satisfying to win that kind of match."

Wayzata rebounded in the fourth and final set, banking a lead that allowed to win as eight before finishing off the match with 25-19 victory.

"It feels so good," senior Sierra Moore said. "Everyone wanted to be the team to take home. We got to show that we are the team that deserves to have this."

CLASS 2A SAUK CENTRE 3, JACKSON COUNTY CENTRAL 1



Sauk Centre setter Ella Fosseth (second from left) and libero Madeline Nelson (third from left) celebrate with their championship trophy after defeating Jackson County Central. JACOB LARSEN - Star Tribune

Stirred by a first-set loss, Sauk Centre reverses tide

Mainstreeters sharpened focus boosted them in a dominating finish.

By JIM ILLIEN
jillien@startribune.com

Early in the first set of Sauk Centre's 13-25, 25-21, 25-22, 25-19 victory over Jackson County Central in the Class 2A championship match, Mainstreeters coach Jim Klaphake admitted that the team saw on the court was far different from the team he knew.

"I talked to the girls about how we wanted to come out and play. That was not it," he said, recalling a disastrous first set in which Jackson County Central practically refused to make a mistake. "I said, 'They

just punched us in the mouth. Now, we need to react.'"

They reacted in the best way possible, winning three consecutive sets with defense that got better in each set and a diverse offensive attack.

Sauk Centre opened up a narrow lead in the second set, rode it to victory and built on that improvement for the rest of the match.

"We just had to settle down," Klaphake said. "We were a little nervous. Once we settled down, we were fine."

It was especially improved by his players' ability to block out the surroundings and the circumstances and all the pressure that went along with them.

"You see professional teams fold up after someone gets a

run on them like they did that first set," Klaphake said. "We're talking about high school girls. They had the ability to just bear down and focus."

"We've been working all year on trying to ignore the crowd, especially the loud sections," said senior Emma Killeen, who finished tied with teammate Jenna Caplan for most kills in the match with 11 kills.

By the time the Mainstreeters finished off the third set, winning nine of the final 10 points, Klaphake was satisfied, knowing the team that had won 29 matches in a row leading up to the final was back.

"To be honest, they were so fired up, I was thinking, 'Settle down,'" he joked, eliciting laughs from his players.

CLASS 1A MAYER LUTHERAN 3, MINNEOTA 0



Mayer Lutheran players erupted in celebration after the final point in a three-set sweep of Minneota in Saturday's Class 1A championship match in St. Paul. AARON LAURIE - Star Tribune

Mayer Lutheran prevails in anticipated showdown

The Crusaders knew they would have to go through the reigning champions.

By HEATHER HILL
Special to the Star Tribune

Sometimes it's too tempting to look at possibilities ahead, like how your team might face for a championship. Sports cliché like "one game at a time" aside.

Mayer Lutheran coach Joelle Grimley definitely looked.

"The beginning of the year, we played Minnesota the very first match," Grimley said. "All of us coaches said 'this is what it's going to come down to. Our last match of the season will be Minnesota versus

Mayer Lutheran. You have to plan for that.'"

Everything went according to plan for No. 1-ranked Mayer Lutheran (32-2) as it dispatched Minneota with a 25-15, 25-20, 25-18 sweep to win the Class 1A volleyball championship Saturday.

Mayer Lutheran, without dropping a set, won the program's fourth state title. The others came in 1982, 2006 and 2017.

Senior Lilly Wichholz had a match-high 17 kills, giving her 89 for the tournament and 576 for her career. Her cousin, junior Gabrielle Wichholz, had 11 kills and 10 digs, while junior Stella Maass recorded 10 kills, including four during the team's 9-0 run to pull

away in the third set after trailing 7-5.

"When they went on that little run, we just had to know in our minds, we couldn't give up and we couldn't let them go on more of a run," Maass said. "We had to step it there. And then we had to go on our own run and play our game."

The Vikings got 10 kills and 11 digs from senior Natalie Stolbeck, along with 13 kills from junior Ireland Stansen.

"I thought later on in the match we did a much better job of defending and adapting to [Mayer Lutheran]. Minnesota coach Hayley Frain said, 'But started out just a little bit on our heels, and you can't do that against a great team like that.'"