



Left, Lone Tree's Hogan Eden directs the ball to the Lady Lion setter. Right Hillcrest Academy's Kylee Statler sends the ball over the net to extend the play.

GIOVANNI CORONEL/THE NEWS

Lone Tree picks up conference win at Hillcrest

BY GIOVANNI CORONEL

The News

KALONA

The Lone Tree Lions recorded their fifth win of the season with a three-set sweep over the Hillcrest Academy Ravens this past Thursday. They won with the scores of 25-18, 25-21, and 25-20.

Riley Krueger, a senior from Lone Tree, led the way with eight kills, seven digs, and three aces.

"Certainly, Riley had a good night hitting," said Lone Tree head coach Lora Sieverding. "You know our sophomore class is still working real hard to get up there and they're learning from Riley and she's doing a great job showing them kind of how it's done."

It was a nice night serving for the Lions with 13 aces as a team and were 68-72 serving overall.

The senior setter for the Lions, Ella Buser, was quite productive in all three sets in getting her teammates in position to score. She finished with 15 assists, three kills, and five digs.

"Ella had a really good night setting. Kind of battled through some calls there. Stayed after her aggressive shots on the net that she likes to do," Sieverding said.

Lone Tree was able to snap a three-game losing streak with



Cate Sexton, Alex Dautremont (14), Ella Buser, Riley Krueger (4) and Avery Morarie celebrate after a point.

GIOVANNI CORONEL/THE NEWS

this win and the next game played will be on October 13th when they go on the road to face Cedar Valley Christian

"They just had fun. It's been a while since we had a lot of fun and they played well together. It's the little, tiny things that kind of came together tonight," Sieverding said.

The closest of the three sets was the second set. Down the

stretch the score was as close as Hillcrest 20 to Lone Tree 21, but in a common occurrence all three sets had, the Ravens couldn't snatch the lead back.

"We need to learn to play like we're behind," said Hillcrest head coach Brandon Statler. "When we are behind usually that's when we turn it on. The first two sets had entirely too many errors, just

hitting errors, unforced errors, little bit slow to the ball."

The leading scorer for the Ravens was sophomore Malia Yoder with nine kills and 17 digs. The second highest scorer for the team was a three-way tie between freshman Niva Helmuth, freshman Claire Withrow, and sophomore Kylee Statler as they all had seven kills.

"Our four big hitters and leaders," Statler said, "Malia Yoder did everything. Kills, digs, serves. Claire Withrow, first night doing all the setting, she was great. She mixed up her attacks with sets and I thought she did outstanding."

"Kylee Statler had a couple blocks, and half a dozen kills, couple aces, I thought she did great. Niva Helmuth, as always, she was a beast in the back row. She hustles to the ball. She's quick. I don't think she had a single drop tonight."

The Ravens had six aces as a team with Helmuth, Statler, and sophomore Lydia Beachy all tallying in two aces a piece.

The errors became too frequent in the three sets for Hillcrest, and it was something the head coach knows they need to correct moving forward.

"Hitting errors in the first two sets and service errors in the last set," said Statler. "Unforced errors, that was our Achilles' heel tonight. It was too much to overcome."

Lone Tree travels to Cedar Rapids on Thursday for a rematch with Cedar Valley Christian. The Lady Lions were 21-12, 21-15 winners over the Huskies in their home tournament.

Lone Tree (5-18) will face Central City (15-10) in the first round of the postseason on Monday, October 17.

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the varsity players, and Sherry Evans is quick to compliment them.

Well, OK, every high school volleyball team does that, let's say.

But when you lose every conference match of the season, it gets personal. This year, the Golden Hawks won every River Valley match except one. And you know who that was. So, that brings us full circle and back to West Liberty.

Superman has his Kryptonite.

And the Golden Hawks have West Liberty, a team that won the River Valley South regular-season title and is ranked No. 6 in Class 3A.

"I'm almost happy," Sherry Evans said. "If we were number one, if we would have got West Liberty that one time."

Almost. The Golden Hawks swept Wilton for the first time since 2014. They swept Iowa City Regina and West Branch and Durant and Washington and Highland. They never lost at home.

The only hiccup was a 3-1 loss to West Liberty on Sept. 8, a loss that set up the Golden Hawks as runner-up in the conference.

"Overall, for Mid-Prairie, being number two so far right now, we've come a long way from the first year I started

coaching, 2019. We were dead last," Evans said. "We just kept trying to move it up from there. Very proud of the girls."

And this isn't the last of the runs at a conference title. Not at all.

Jovi Evans, a 5-foot-6 freshman, ranks No. 2 on the team in assists and kills. Callie Huber, a 6-foot sophomore, and Harper Pacha, a 5-foot-11 freshman, are monsters along the front line. Juniors Behla Schmidt and Paige Safly are making an impact. Mitchell and Duwa are defensive machines in the back row.

None of those Golden Hawks were born the last time Mid-Prairie made it to the state tournament.

History could indeed rewind next week. After facing Washington on Monday, the Golden Hawks would face Davis County or Central Lee in the regional semifinals Wednesday and then a possible date with No. 2-ranked Davenport Assumption on Oct. 25 in the regional final.

And then? Maybe West Liberty again.

It's time.

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Lydia Beachy, Adrienne Blauvelt, Claire Withrow, Erin Bontrager, and Malia Yoder celebrate after coming back from nine points down to take the third set 28-26 at Cedar Valley Christian.

JEFF YODER/THE NEWS

Ravens take Huskies to five sets

BY JEFF YODER

The News

CEDAR RAPIDS

The Hillcrest Ravens came back from an early 12-3 deficit in set three for a 28-26 win, but Cedar Valley Christian took the final two sets on Monday to win it in five.

Malia Yoder led the Ravens with 22 kills and 15 digs in the loss.

The Ravens bounced back from a 24-26 loss in set one to take the second. A perfectly placed tip from Kylee Statler put the Ravens up 23-15 before the Huskies scored three of the next four.

Needing just one more point, Hillcrest coach Brandon Statler called a timeout and told his team to stop pressing with a six-point lead, and allow

CVC to make the game-ending mistake. A point later, the Huskies hit the ball off the ceiling and Hillcrest tied the match with a 25-19 win.

Trailing 17-9 in the second set, a perfectly placed spike from Erin Bontrager started a run for the Ravens. Niva Helmuth had a kill and a block as the gap closed to 21-20.

A serve into the net gave CVC a chance to end it with a 25-24 lead, but a Husky error tied it up and Yoder's kill gave the advantage to the Ravens, who earned the 28-26 win.

Neither team led by more than a few points in the fourth set until CVC scored five of the last seven points in a 25-22 win. That momentum carried over to the fifth as the Huskies used runs of 5-0 and 8-0 to take the set 15-5.

Statler finished with 15 kills and 10 digs.

Freshman setter Claire Withrow had a career-high 38 assists and added nine kills in the loss.

Withrow had 24 assists in a 22-20, 21-18 win over Keota in a tournament at Washington on Saturday. Statler had eight kills while Yoder finished with seven kills and 18 digs.

Adrienne Blauvelt was 6-of-6 serving with an ace in the 14-21, 13-21 loss to Highland. The Ravens also fell to Sigourney and Washington.

The Ravens (3-22) traveled to Louisa-Muscatine (2-20) on Tuesday with both teams looking for their first SEISC win.

Hillcrest opens the postseason on Monday, October 17 at No. 14 New London (21-9).



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