

# Warriors cap off regular season with sweep

By Abby Hooven

Normally, the Eminence volleyball crowd and student section remains a steady force throughout matches, constantly filling the gymnasium with cheers and applause.

Thursday night's matchup with Williamstown was a more hushed atmosphere on and off the court than usual, but the Warriors made some noise by the end of the evening.

The Warriors shook off a slow start to sweep the Lady Demons 2-0, 25-21 and 25-15, to end the regular season.

"Really, really slow start," said head coach Eddie Sweeney. "The energy was low I think in the building, and bench was quiet, crowd was quiet, we were quiet, and that's fall break. We dug deep, found a way to win."

Three huge slams for senior Megan Sweeney and a kill on the right side for Tessa Stenger prompted a Williamstown timeout down 7-3 in the first set. Following a solo block for Sara

Welch in the middle, the Lady Demons rattled off five points in a row to tie the set.

Williamstown's Abby Knarr kept Eminence out of system during the run, earning two aces along the way. The scoring spree ended when Knarr sent a serve just long.

Sweeney and Stenger picked up back-to-back kills to break a 9-9 tie before a tip kill for setter Jenna Carter and a back row kill for Sweeney pushed the lead to 14-10.

Yet, the Lady Demons crawled back into the game, taking the lead 15-14 on three kills and two errors by Lauren Thomas.

The set remained tight until Eminence returned from a timeout down 18-17. Julia Dentinger stepped up with a huge service run to separate the Warriors for good. Stenger ended the tight opening set with an outside kill.

Neither team led by more than two points to start the second set. Williamstown found an open spot in the middle of the court on several

occasions in the first and second sets to earn easy points before Eminence switched its blocking plan.

"We had to make some adjustments. We stopped blocking two and just blocked one to help cover short middle, which we got burned on a few times early," said Sweeney. "We made that adjustment and that made a big difference of just keeping the ball in play and not missing out on those balls."

Once Eminence covered the center of the court, plays lasted longer and the Warriors kept Williamstown from picking up points in that zone.

A roll shot kill on the outside by Marisa Delgado pushed the Warrior lead to five midway through the second set.

Following an error, Eminence put together a 5-0 run to break open the set, using a Carter ace and kills by Sweeney and Delgado.

Delgado finished with five kills.

"We served really, really well. I feel like we defended well. Didn't

get burned on too many short balls," said Sweeney. "Pretty proud of the night overall."

The lead stretched to eight on a smart play at the net from senior Sara Welch. She quickly battled down an overpass to give Eminence a 21-13 edge. Welch's quick thinking on overpass plays paid off multiple times throughout the night.

The Warriors may have started quiet, but went out with a bang, ending the game with three straight kills to secure its eighth consecutive win.

Sweeney led all hitters with 15 kills. She tacked on seven digs, following behind Dentinger in that category. Dentinger picked up 13 digs and two service aces.

Eminence finishes the regular season with a 23-7 record and looks to defend its 31st district title as postseason begins.

"We're excited. We got the No. 1 seed in the district, so we'll have a bye on Monday," said Sweeney.



Photos by Abby Hooven

Megan Sweeney shuts down a Lady Demon attack.



Photo by Abby Hooven

Marisa Delgado earned five kills in the win over Williamstown.



Photo by Abby Hooven

Goalkeeper Andy Johnson launches a free kick toward the opposite end of the field.

## Soccer

FROM PAGE A7

Yellow Jackets for the first 40 minutes, Woodford began to take advantage of its increased momentum.

Twice, Johnson swatted away a goal attempt just to see a Yellow Jacket swoop in and score off the deflection. The first game with 35:29 to go and put Woodford in the lead 2-1.

The second occurred with 18:18 left in the game. Johnson deflected a free kick before Woodford knocked the ball in on the rebound.

Henry had few shot attempts in the second half as errors and calls against them piled up. Most breakaway runs for Ordonez or Hoepner resulted in an offside call.

"The second half, it really felt like the refs took the game away from us, taking all momentum,

and chances we had to score were negated by offside calls," said Toole.

Foul calls on both teams, especially the Wildcats, ramped up as well. Hoepner and Dominic Escobar picked up yellow cards during aggressive plays, and Escobar was ejected as it was his second yellow card of the night.

Henry was left to play with 10 players for the remainder of the game as a result.

"That really was the nail in the coffin. Hard to beat a top team in the state when you're down one player," Toole said.

Woodford padded the lead with 11:28 remaining. The Yellow Jackets went around a diving Johnson for an open shot to secure the win and a spot in the semifinals of the tournament.

Johnson ended with 11 saves, bringing his total to 231 for the season.

Toole credited several other players for their performances, including Mariano Rivera and Daniel Arroyo.

"Mariano Rivera saved his best game for the regional tournament. He played like his hair was on fire all night. He will be a big part of the program going forward," said Toole. "Daniel Arroyo was a solid at CM line as he has been all year."

Arroyo was named to the Eighth Region All-Tournament team.

Though the season ended, the Wildcats accomplished many feats in a historic year. Along with the longest winning streak in program histo-

ry, Henry also recorded the most goals in a season with 71.

Ordonez accounted for 28 of the 71 goals with Hoepner following him with 16.

Most of all, the conclusion of the season marks the end of the storied high school careers of nine seniors: Johnson, Escobar, Arroyo, Collin King, DJ Leatherwood, Zack Newton, Michael Padgett, John-Thomas Redman and Anthony Taft.

The Wildcats finish the season with a 15-5-2 record.

## Wildcats

FROM PAGE A7

Woodford put Mercer near the goal on the following possession. A sack and an incomplete pass put the Titans in a third-and-13 situation, but Mays found Drakeford again for a 27-yard touchdown to tie the game with 7:40 remaining in regulation.

The Wildcats countered with an 11 play, 80-yard drive featuring seven carries by Matthews, including the 1-yard carry for the touchdown with 1:51 to go.

A face mask call against Henry on Mercer's first play of its drive and several completed passes moved the Titans down the field. The final pass, a 10-yard launch to Wade Lane, and the completed PAT tied the game at 35-35 with 22.9 seconds left.

Henry only got one play off before the end of regulation, a four-yard carry by Hardy.

Mercer took the field first in overtime, and the Wildcat defense came away with the biggest stop of the game, and possibly the year. Griffith was brought down for a loss of three yards and a false start against the Titans pushed them back to the 18-yard line. Two incomplete passes brought up fourth-and-18, and Jase Coconaugh hit a field goal to put Mercer ahead 38-35.

"When we look at the team effort, we had the turnover on the punt earlier in the game that led to a touchdown. You have



Photo by Abby Hooven

Ray Matthews hurdles his teammate to gain yardage. Matthews finished with four touchdowns, including the game-winner in overtime.

a kickoff return that ends up being a touchdown. Your defense has a couple big stands, and the biggest stand at the end there in overtime," Wright said.

The Wildcats used two carries to get to the 1-yard line. Out of a Mercer County timeout, Henry was stopped just shy of the goal line to bring up fourth-and-goal. Wright called a timeout, and rather than play it safe with a field goal, he decided to put his O-line to the test.

"I don't want to look back and say I didn't put the game on the offensive line," said Wright. "We called timeout on that fourth-down play, I said, 'Hey we're putting it on you O-line, move them, we're giving the ball to Ray, put it in the end zone,' and it was close but he got in. He definitely

got in."

With the protection of the O-line, Matthews found the end zone, and after a quick pause by the referees to inspect the pile, the touchdown was confirmed, much to the dismay of the Mercer County coaches.

"It was a great team effort, a great team win," said Wright.

Unlike the previous district matchups with running clocks, Henry needed every second to emerge on the winning side.

"The last few games have not been competitive, and that's the big thing too, to be able to compete with a program that's got a lot of history. To be competitive in this district, you're gonna have to beat teams that have a lot of history that are established and have had some wins," said

Wright.

According to the KHSAA website, the win was the first against Mercer at least since 1999 when KHSAA's records first show a matchup between the two schools.

The thrilling end also secured the status that many saw as impossible: district runner-up. With that accomplishment, the Wildcats will also host a playoff game for the first time in years.

"To be able to be district runner-up and win against these other good teams, I mean that's huge. It's big for our program to show that we can play with anybody, that we're not competing for just making it in, that we're going to win it," said Wright. "It's huge for us in the future. It's huge for us now. I'm so proud of the kids."

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