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JCC VOLLEYBALL



PHOTOS BY DAN CONDON

Above: Georgianna Wenzel (17) and her Jackson County Central volleyball teammates celebrate after Wenzel's ace serve sends the Huskies to state. Below: Seniors Taylor Post (front row from left), Sadie Voss, Wenzel and Sydney Osterberg show off the Section 3AA championship trophy after the Huskies beat Paynesville Area in the finals.

'WE DID IT'

Huskies win final two sets to win five-set thriller over Paynesville Area and advance to the state tournament for the first time since 2003



by DAN CONDON
Sports Editor

When Georgianna Wenzel tossed the ball in the air to serve during the fifth set of the Section 3AA championship this past Saturday at Southwest Minnesota State University in Marshall, she knew what was at stake.

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity you have to serve to go to state," Wenzel said.

Wenzel's left hand zipped the ball just over the net and between a pair of Paynesville Area players for an ace serve, sending the Jackson County Central volleyball team to state for the first time since 2003.

"It's been 18 years since we last went, so it's super awesome to get that very See **CHAMPS** on B5

Inside...

B4-5 JCC beat Luverne in the sub-section finals and is the No. 4 seed for the state tournament.

JCC CROSS COUNTRY

Boyum 42nd, Anderson 88th at state



PHOTO COURTESY OF EMILY ANDERSON
Andrew Boyum makes his way through the 5,000-meter course at the Class A state cross country meet Saturday at St. Olaf College in Northfield.

by DAN CONDON
Sports Editor

A pair of Jackson County Central seniors ended their illustrious careers at the Class A state cross country meet Saturday at St. Olaf College in Northfield.

Andrew Boyum finished 42nd in the boys' race and Olivia Anderson placed 88th in the girls' race.

More than anything, JCC head coach Rafe York said it was great to see the two finish their careers on the big stage.

"To see that culmination is awesome," he said. "To See **CC** on B3

JCC FOOTBALL

Arrows rally past Huskies in Section 3AA finals

by DAN CONDON
Sports Editor

Throughout much of the Section 3AA championship game this past Friday at Southwest Minnesota State University in Marshall, it looked like the second-seeded Jackson County Central football team would upset the top-seeded and unbeaten Pipestone Arrows.

Even when the Arrows rallied to tie the game with less than 10 minutes left, the Huskies neared the end See **FB** on B3



PHOTO BY DAN CONDON

Payton Handevitd looks to make sure nobody is going to catch him during an 86-yard touchdown run against Pipestone in the Section 3AA finals this past Friday.



PHOTO BY DAN CONDON

Members of the Jackson County Central volleyball team show off their Section 3AA championship trophy Saturday. Team members are (front, from left): Andria Benson, Taylor Post, Sadie Voss, Georgianna Wenzel, Sydney Osterberg and student manager Victoria Murdock. Back: Head coach Deidre Wierson, assistant coach Krista Nelson, Elese Paplow, Erin Gallagher, Peyton Hanson, Sarah Anderson, Maci Farmer, Brittany Arduser, Alexis O'Reilly, Emma Haren, assistant coach Janet Haren and athletic trainer Caitlin Place.

CHAMPS: Huskies rally to win section title

Continued from B1

last point," Wenzel said. "That was the best feeling."

Wenzel's ace serve capped an incredible rally for the Huskies, which saw them win the final two sets to beat the Bulldogs 3-2.

JCC lost a back-and-forth first set 27-25 before winning the second set 25-17. The Bulldogs dominated the Huskies 25-10 in the third set, but JCC won the final two sets 26-24 and 15-10 to win the Section 3AA championship.

"It's like a dream," JCC head coach Deidre Wierson said after the win. "Everything is surreal to me. It's one of those reassuring moments to take that breath and say, 'We did it. This is so well deserved. We earned this.'"

Season on the brink

After JCC and Paynesville split the first two sets, nothing went right for the Huskies in an important third set.

JCC trailed just 5-4 early, then the wheels fell off.

Paynesville scored four straight points, then four more after a Husky point. After JCC scored another point, the Bulldogs rattled off another four, then later won on a 7-0 run.

Wierson said the Huskies were battling, but just couldn't stop Natalie Riley and Kyleigh Tangen.

"I think they were fighting through most of it," she said. "We just could not stop those two hitters from the fabulous team of Paynesville."

"Things didn't go our way and we got a little frustrated with ourselves," Wenzel said.

Senior Sadie Voss said late in the third set, she was ready to move on.

"I just wanted to get it over and start fresh again, but I just knew we could fight back those next two sets," she said.

Huskies regroup

Wierson said after los-

ing so soundly in the third set, the Huskies needed to regroup in a hurry heading into the fourth set.

"After the third set, we really just focused in on what we needed to do on our side of the net," she said. "Reset and let's play our game. Let's execute our pass so we can really make a play for our hitters."

Voss said the fear of the careers of four seniors coming to an end provided motivation in the fourth set.

"This is do or die," she said. "If we lose this set, we're done, so why not give it your all and just play really hard — just have fun."

Wenzel said she knew if her team put everything on the line it would come out on top.

"Just give it your all," she said. "This could be the very last game we ever play together. If you're giving it your all, it just makes it that much better."

Huskies storm back

The fourth set was no cakewalk, but the Huskies were able to keep their season alive with a late rally.

An ace serve by Andria Benson — who came in to spark the Huskies during the second set — gave JCC a 12-9 lead, but the Bulldogs scored the next six points to take a 15-12 lead.

The Huskies answered right back with the next five points — coming on two kills from Voss and one acepiece from Wenzel and Maci Farmer — to regain a 17-15 lead.

JCC still led by two when Emma Haren picked up a kill for a 21-19 lead, but the Bulldogs scored three straight points to take a 22-21 lead.

The set was tied at 23 and 24, but the Huskies prevailed when Voss hammered a kill and an error followed for a 26-24 win.

"That last set we had just lost 25-10," Voss said. "That just shows how much

determination we have and how much trust we have in each other. We wanted it so bad."

"It was all or nothing," Wierson said. "I thought there was some great captain leadership out there."

Wierson credited the back-row play of senior Sydney Osterberg for helping the Huskies win the fourth set.

"Sydney had some really great digs that really kept us alive in that match," she said.

"That fourth set we were just thinking we need to go all in," Osterberg said. "All in or we're done and we went hard and we got it."

Huskies complete comeback in fifth set

Haren started the fifth set — which goes to 15 — with an ace and Peyton Hanson recorded a block for a 2-1 lead. The Huskies trailed 5-4, but a kill by Voss gave the Huskies a lead and they never trailed again.

A kill by Voss gave JCC a 7-6 advantage and a kill by Haren later put the Huskies up 10-8.

Haren then served an ace off the top of the net for a 12-8 lead. Hanson hammered a kill for a 13-9 lead and Voss put the Huskies on the brink of state with a kill for a 14-10 lead.

That's when Wenzel served an ace to send the Huskies to state.

"I honestly thought I was going to miss it," Wenzel said.

She didn't, and the Huskies didn't miss their chance to make history.

"We thought we were going to make it," Osterberg said. "We wanted it, so we pushed hard and we got it."

Osterberg said that fifth set was some of the best volleyball the team played all season.

"We played so well," she said. "It's the best we've played in a long time. We started talking and our hits were hard, our passes were

good. We were just on that last set."

Huskies, Bulldogs split

The first set was tied 15 times and the lead changed hands seven times.

The Bulldogs led much of the way, but the Huskies rallied to tie the set at 17 and it was tied at every point until 22. The Huskies were on the verge of winning the set when back-to-back kills by Haren and Wenzel gave them a 24-22 lead, but the Bulldogs scored the next three points. JCC staved off set point with a kill by Haren, but Paynesville tallied the next two points to steal the first set.

The Huskies rebounded quickly and never trailed after the first few points of the second set.

Kills by Wenzel, Voss and Farmer highlighted an early 4-0 run for a 6-4 lead and an ace by Farmer gave JCC an 11-7 advantage.

The Huskies led just 16-15 later in the set, but three straight points gave them some breathing room. That stretch started a 9-2 run that gave the Huskies a set win.

Kills by Haren and Benson and an ace by Haren ended the set in style for the Huskies.

"That was a huge momentum shift for us and confidence booster for us to know we are a good team and we can do this," Wierson said of the second-set win.

Benson provided a spark during that set, coming into the match for her first extended playing time since returning from an injury.

"I thought Andria did an awesome job coming in," Wierson said. "We needed something else to go on with that attack on the other side of the net. She did a great job of coming in and made some key plays. This team, they're so versatile that they're just very unique and I'm so proud of them."

Wierson joins mentor as only coaches to lead Huskies to state tournament

Jackson County Central volleyball coach Deidre Wierson has come close to making it to state far more times than she'd like.

As a player, Wierson and the Huskies finished as section runner-up her junior and senior seasons, both times losing to the eventual state champion.

As an assistant coach, Wierson saw the Huskies get close to state on several occasions, usually losing to Marshall, which almost always won the state title.

And as head coach, Wierson also has come close to state, with the closest a section runner-up finish in 2016.

Now, Wierson is just the second coach in school history to lead the Huskies to state, joining her mentor and former coach, the late Carolyn Hummel.

"Carolyn Hummel is the reason why I really love this game," Wierson said following JCC's section championship Saturday. "To see her husband here cheering us on — I don't know what else to say other than its just humbling to be able to bring this dream and my hometown to a place that we've been trying to get back to for so long."

Having her name mentioned in the same sentence as Hummel's is something that brings a great deal of pride to Wierson.

"It just means a lot," she said. "The only word I can think of is humbling and I'm so thankful."

Benson said there were nerves early, but she eventually calmed down.

"I was ready to play, but I was nervous at the same time," she said. "I felt prepared."

'It's amazing'

There was no lack of smiles on the faces of JCC players and fans after the five-set thriller.

"That feeling was amazing," Osterberg said of winning the section title. "Honestly, I can't explain it. Just knowing we are going to state is awesome."

"It's amazing," Benson said. "We worked so hard this season for it and I'm just glad that we kept pushing through every set and kept pushing through until the end. We really deserve it."

"It's unreal," Voss said. "It's incredible. I'm so proud of this team. We lost the first set, but we didn't give up. We made history and we're going to keep getting it done."

Voss said going to state as a senior is the perfect way to cap her career.

"It's a great year to do it," she said. "I've always wanted to go to state and my dream came true."

State has been a longtime dream for Wenzel, as well.

"I've been dreaming about this since I was in elementary school, coming here and watching all the older girls," she said. "It's really exciting being that senior now and getting to be that role model for the little girls."

Team effort

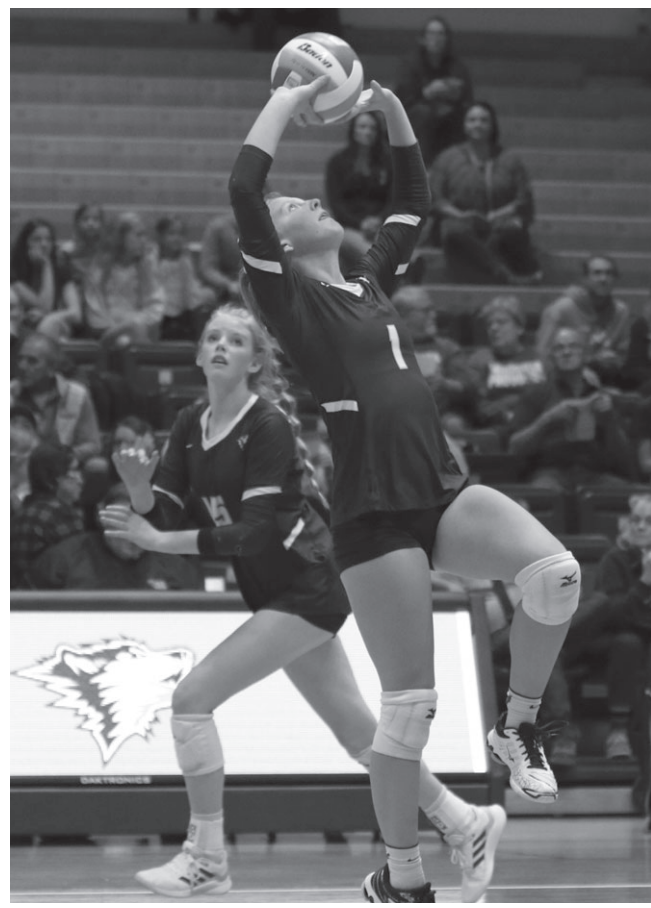
Voss finished the match with 19 kills and 18 digs and was 11-for-12 serving. Haren hammered 17 kills and added six digs and five ace serves.

Wenzel finished with eight kills and 14 digs and was 19-for-21 serving with two aces. Hanson had four kills and a team-high three blocks. Benson had a pair of digs, one ace and one kill.

Farmer did it all for the Huskies, finishing with 45 set assists, eight digs and five kills while going a perfect 17-for-17 at the service line with two aces.

O'Reilly had eight digs and was 11-for-13 serving and Osterberg recorded seven digs.

Post had two digs and Elese Paplow was two-for-two serving.



Top left: Emma Haren (left) and Andria Benson go up for a block in Saturday's Section 3AA finals against Paynesville Area. Above: Peyton Hanson (8) and teammates celebrate a point against the Bulldogs. Right: Maci Farmer (8) sets to a charging Haren during the section finals. Left: Sydney Osterberg passes the ball against Paynesville.