

Roxana Volleyball Tournament off to fantastic start with Mt. Olive, Roxana landing two wins each

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August 23 2016 1:19 PM





ROXANA – There’s nothing better than kicking off the volleyball season with an all-out tournament.

On **Monday** afternoon, the **2016 Roxana Lady Shells 8th Annual Volleyball Tournament** invited young female athletes from five schools from around the area to **Roxana High School** to start the competitive season.

“We always wanted to do something at the beginning of the year so coaches could get to play teams that they normally don’t get to play,” Roxana head coach Mark McKinney said. “We try to get a vast array of teams together and give them a chance to see what their players’ strengths and weaknesses are. Plus, it’s a great fundraiser for the team.”

To begin the tournament in the **Larry Milazzo Gymnasium**, the **Marquette Catholic High School Explorers** faced off against the **Mt. Olive High School Wildcats** in a match that spanned three sets. In the first, the Wildcats primarily held command over the Explorers, holding a five-point lead over their opponents. Marquette pushed through to take the lead and victoriously close out the first set with a score of **25-18**. Shot down by the first set, the Wildcats got back on their feet and knocked the Explorers down to win the second set with a solid 10-point lead at **25-15**.

The third set, like most, was a complete nail biter for each team's friends and family members in the stands. Similar to the first, the Wildcats held command over the Explorers early on and took the lead. However, the Explorers were able to make a comeback and tie the score up at 14 before Mt. Olive ultimately defeated them **16-14**.

"It feels really good. We have a solid team this year with five seniors coming back, even though we're missing two starters today," Mt. Olive head coach Andrea Keller said after her team's win. "It was good having other girls' discipline and get us that win."



Meanwhile, at the same time the Wildcats and Explorers faced off, the **Civic Memorial High School Eagles** and the **Madison High School Trojans** duked it out in the school's other gymnasium. The Eagles, led by Amanda Biggs, showed some excellent teamwork. Communication seemed to be a problem for the Trojans, which ultimately led to their defeat in two sets with scores of **25-4** and **25-14** respectively.

"We started off looking to get our flow and rhythm going," Biggs said after the game. "We're excited to start off our season with this tournament. It's our first time in this tournament, so we're looking to see what level we're playing at right now and what we need to do to elevate this year."

In their first time out on their own tournament, the Lady Shells were ready to face off against their opponents from Madison. The Trojans, a bit shaken from their first game against Civic Memorial, had some problems getting their footing throughout the course of the match. Roxana, on the other hand, maintained their composure and stood strong against their opponent. The Shells ultimately defeated the Trojans in two sets with scores of **25-3** and **25-7**.

In the night's main event, with one win under their belts each, the Shells and the Eagles got ready for their match. While the rivalry between the two teams exists, there is nothing but respect for both sides of the court.

“Our players and myself know all of those girls on Bethalto,” McKinney said. “They’re friends and they all know each other very well. There’s not any hatred. It’s all mutual respect.”

Though the teams love to play for the bragging rights of it all, the match extended into three close sets, showing the truly competitive nature of the two teams. In the first set, the Shells grasped the win with a score of **25-21** against the Eagles. In the second, Civic Memorial narrowly pushed past Roxana to win by two points at **26-24**. Ultimately, the Shells pushed through their competition and earned their second win of the day against Civic Memorial in the third set with a score of **15-6**.

“When you have a rivalry like this one, it doesn’t matter what records are. It’s nice to win, but our goal as a team is to be competitive,” McKinney said. “We were very aggressive and learned from our mistakes. It was a very enjoyable match.”

While the Shells and Eagles were facing off in the large gymnasium, Marquette and the Father **McGivney Catholic High School Griffins** duked it out in the small gym. The Explorers defeated their opponents in two sets (**25-10, 25-19**).

