

Tigers sweep of Cor Jesu 25-23, 25-14

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – If one thing stands out for **Edwardsville's girls volleyball team** this season, it's the Tiger defense.

That defense proved to be a key factor in the Tigers' 25-23, 25-14 sweep of **Cor Jesu** of south St. Louis County Wednesday evening at Lucco-Jackson Gym.

The non-conference win put the Tigers at 14-3 for the season, while the Chargers fell to 9-10-3.

“The defense was tremendous; I think that's one of our strengths this year, our defense,” said Tiger coach Jami Parker. “We don't have to sell anything to this group – this group is competitive, extremely competitive; they're playing to win, they've got a lot of experience behind them and there's nothing to sell. It's just fine-tuning and getting details done.

“They want to win.”

Parker singled out Rachel Pranger and Kate Martin for their contributions in the win. “Rachel had a huge game; Kate Martin had a huge game tonight, too; with the two of them running clean, it's a hard attack to balance. Kate did a lot of attacking out of the back row tonight; she was swinging hard. That's a tough ball to consistently hit back there – she did a phenomenal job tonight.”

“Our passes were really on tonight,” Pranger said, “and our sets and everything. We all connected and it was perfect.”

The Tigers jumped out to a 6-1 lead in the opening game, big kills from Pranger and Martin helping Edwardsville hold on to the lead which became a 7-3 lead before the Chargers made a run from a 11-7 EHS lead to take a 15-13 lead midway through the game. Edwardsville managed to draw level at 15-15 and begin to draw away at 18-15.

Cor Jesu battled back and managed to forge ties at 20-20 and 22-22 Edwardsville at 23-22; the Chargers tied up the game one more time at 23-23 before EHS scored the game's final two points for the win.

Parker noticed one thing about the Tigers when she came into the huddle to address the team during the between-game break. “I walked into the huddle late, but you could hear the girls talking – 'all right, we got that one done, but let's clean this up, let's do this better,' “ Parker said. “You could hear them talking about it in the huddle when they walked over, so they were ready to go.”

Ready to go they were; Edwardsville stormed out of the gates to a 6-1 lead, which they extended to 12-3 thanks to some big plays that kept the Chargers on their heels. The closest they would come would be 13-7 before EHS went on another run that made it 16-7 and put them in full control of the game, extending the lead to 21-10 before putting it away with a big spike for the final point of the match.

Pranger led the Tigers with 16 kills, with Martin adding 11; Rachel Verdun had 25 assists, with Megan Woll and Verdun contributing nine digs. Pranger had seven points from serve with an ace, with Woll also scoring seven points with two aces. Jessica Smtih led the Chargers with five kills, with Meghan Cantwell adding four; Sarah Boll

and Courtney Wood each had two blocks and Tessa Buchhite and Mary Kate Meyer each had 10 assists on the night.

The Tigers travel to Fletcher Gym in Collinsville for a 4:30 p.m. Southwestern Conference match against the Kahoks today, then host O'Fallon Tuesday and head to Belleville West Thursday before going to St. Charles, Ill., for the Mizuno Classic tournament Oct. 7-8.

