



Edwardsville Volleyball Player Alexa Harris Signs With Air Force Academy

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE - Edwardsville girls volleyball senior Alexa Harris, one of the Tigers' key players in their successful program, signed a letter of intent to attend the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colo., in a ceremony Thursday afternoon at the school.

Harris, an outside hitter and a player that brings a spark and intensity to the court, will be playing for head coach Keith Barnett for the Falcons, who play in an always very competitive Mountain West Conference, starting in 2022. And signing to play for a service academy such as Air Force makes the signing doubly proud for her.

"Yes it does," Harris said in a post-signing interview. "It's a pretty big deal, and I feel pretty honored to get the chance to attend a service academy like the Air Force Academy."

A number of factors attracted Harris to the academy and helped influence her decision to play for the Falcons.

"A lot of things attracted me to the Air Force," Harris said. "They have a really good academic program, the facilities are top-notch, and Colorado Springs is just a really pretty place. It's a good community that I'd like to attend college in."

Harris considered a number of schools, all Division-I schools outside the area, before deciding on Air Force. She'll bring her trademark intensity and spark to the volleyball court at the academy.

"I think that I'll bring high energy, intensity, kind of a different way of playing," Harris said. "I think I bring intensity in my play."

First-year Tigers head coach Heather Ohlau is looking forward to Harris playing for the Falcons.

"It's a great thing whenever someone from your program's able to sign to play at the next level," Ohlau said.

And the fact that Harris signed with a service academy was very important in many regards, and it reflects strongly on one of the team's core beliefs.

"Not only being able to do what you love, but also giving back to your country is a great thing, teaching humility and giving back," Ohlau said, "which is a focus of our program as well as volleyball."

Ohlau also feels that Harris will bring a lot to the table for Air Force.

"She's a six-rotation player," Ohlau said. "She's got ability in both the front row and back row. A good service receiver; she's got great instincts on defense, as well a front row contender. She can put the ball away, she can take some shots, she's just an all-around good player."

Harris' ability to light up the court, which helps make her a very fun player to watch, is also an important factor.

"Yeah, she just brings a light to the court," Ohlau said. "She's able to build up her teammates around her, and being a four year player at the varsity level was going to be a stepping stone to the next level."

The competition in the Mountain West, which includes crosstown school Colorado State, along with Nevada, Nevada-Las Vegas, Wyoming, Boise State, and Fresno State, among other schools, is very good and intense. Ohlau is looking forward to seeing Harris play in the league.

"It's going to be interesting to see what she's able to do against players from different regions," Ohlau said, "and I think she'll have a great impact at the academy."

And Harris is looking ahead to bringing that same enthusiasm and intensity to the college court as well.

"Yes, I'm really excited," Harris said. "You know, even though I'll be a freshman next year, I plan on being the same player I am, stepping in there and working hard."

Harris is currently planning on majoring in computer engineering, but that could change at some point while she's in school. After serving her five-year tour of duty, which is required after graduating from the academy, she's undecided whether she'll stay in the service or retire, but she's looking forward to playing for the Falcons and serving her country as well.

"Yes, I'm extremely excited to serve my country," Harris said, "and you know, it's an honor, like I said, to attend the Air Force Academy, and I'm really excited."

Ohlau feels that Harris' future is virtually unlimited.

"Oh, absolutely," Ohlau said. "With any player that leaves our program, I think we're just the foundation, and everything's just up from here. It's just great to see Alexa be able to continue what she loves, and do what she wants."

And with all the uncertainty of being able to have a season because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Harris is hopeful of being able to play her senior season with the Tigers.

"I'm just looking forward to having a season," Harris said. "I really hope I get an opportunity to play my senior year with all my teammates and everything, even if it is a shortened season."