



Kloi Karban Signs To Play Volleyball At McKendree, She Is An iCAN Clinic Female Athlete Of Month For Tigers

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE - Kloi Karban had an excellent senior season for the Edwardsville High girls volleyball team and on Wednesday, she signed a letter of intent to play for McKendree University in Lebanon in a recent ceremony.

Karban was a major contributor to the Tigers' run to fourth place in the IHSA Class 4A state tournament in 2021, with 122 kills, 39 blocks, 39 assists and 37 digs during the season. It's that kind of work ethic and passion for the game that helped her choose the Bearcats for the 2022-23 season. Karban is an iCAN Clinic Female Athlete of the Month for the Tigers.

"Hopefully, my passion for volleyball and my enthusiasm, on the court and off the court," Karban said during an interview that followed the ceremony. "That is what I'm excited about bringing to that team, both indoor and outdoor."

Karban will also play beach volleyball for the Bearcats, helping to launch the program and hoping to get it off to a great start.

"This is their first year of having it there," Karban said, "and I hope I can make an impact on that program."

Karban pointed out the differences between court volleyball and beach volleyball.

"In court volleyball, you have six people," Karban said, "and in beach, you only have two, so I think it's going to be a much different game, like mentally and physically in trying to push myself, outdoor more than indoor for sure."

Karban chose McKendree because of the school's size and also wanted to stay close to home.

"I liked the medium-sized school," Karban said, "and I wanted to stay close to home because of my big family, obviously," referring to many family members who attended the ceremony. "I really wanted the chance to play indoor and outdoor, and they offered me that."

Karban also considered Missouri Baptist University and Webster University, both St. Louis-area schools, but in the end, chose McKendree. She'll major in biology, then will go to nursing school after graduation, with aspirations of being a nurse for kids who have cancer. Karban also described her season with the Tigers in very glowing terms.

"It was so memorable," Karban said. "I didn't think I was going to play volleyball until after this year. The team, after that moment, just really pushed me and I knew I had to play after that and give that shot a chance, especially with the nine other seniors. They just made my head know I had to go somewhere."

Edwardsville head coach Heather Ohlau is very proud of Karban and her accomplishments on the court.

"All the respect goes to Kloi," Ohlau said. "She's worked hard for this, and I can't be more proud of her."

Ohlau thinks that Karban will bring much to the table of McKendree as well.

"She brings a diverse offensive attack," Ohlau said. "Her progress offensively and the power she's able to bring, the different types of attacks, I think, is going to be solid. She's a pretty good blocker as well. So she's still got room to grow and I just can't wait to see what she can do."

When asked if Karban was like a late-bloomer, Ohlau felt that she was a work in progress.

"I think it was more like a work in progress," Ohlau said. "I think confidence played a key part in that, the mental aspect of it. So once she was able to get that mental side of that confidence, the skills just followed."

Ohlau is very proud of Karban and her contributions to the Tigers this past season.

"Absolutely," Ohlau said. "I couldn't be more proud of her. She's one of the players I've been able to coach since she's been in middle school. So just seeing her being able to play at the next level, due to her determination and hard work is so heartwarming."

McKendree is still competing in the Great Lakes Valley Conference, one of the nation's best Division-II leagues, and Ohlau also knows that Karban will be up for the challenge.

"Like I said, her determination and confidence and her drive to be better will set her up to continue that growth," Ohlau said.

Ohlau has many favorite memories of Karban's time with the Tigers.

"I mean, just everything," Ohlau said. "Just her positivity that she brings every day in everything that she does."

Of course, Ohlau is looking ahead to see what Karban does at the next level.

"Yeah, and I'm glad that she's close to home," Ohlau said. "So it makes that drive to possibly being able to see her play at the next level that much better."

Ohlau's very confident that she'll compete at that next level and do well.

"Absolutely," Ohlau said. "Any time you get an athlete that's able to compete at the next level, whether it's large or small, just being able to compete is just a great day for your program. I just couldn't be more proud of her."

Being able to make the state finals and finish fourth was quite the experience for Karban.

"It was just an amazing feeling to finally make it there," Karban said, "To finally make it there and it being my only year on varsity and it being the best one that I could have imagined was really amazing too."

Her favorite memory of playing for the Tigers?

"Definitely the bus rides going, something I can remember, screaming songs to karaoke," Karban said. "and it was just a great time."

That bonding can be so important to any successful team, and it served the Tigers very well during the state-run

"It is," Karban said. "It really is at the end of the day. It's six people on and you're all connecting together."

Karban is looking ahead to the challenges that will be facing her with the Bearcats and making a positive contribution to the team.

"I'm so looking forward to it," Karban said. "I hope I can really make an impact on the program."