

# St. Mary's Eighth-Grade Girls Volleyball Team Captures Southern Conference Tournament

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
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ALTON - The St. Mary's Chargers eighth-grade girls' volleyball team captured the Southern Conference tournament trophy for 2023. The tournament is held every year to cap off the season for the Southern Springfield Catholic Athletic Conference (SSCAC).

The winner also receives the Southern Conference tournament banner. The Chargers were undefeated in the Southern Conference, going 9-0 in regular-season play with a combined record of 21-3.

St. Mary's won against St. Elizabeth to advance to the semi-finals. Mia Lopez served 14 points, including 11 aces. Reese Bechtold led with 5 kills. Katherine Kamp had 2 kills, and Emma Hough, Lopez, and Marie Woodward each had 1 kill.

St. Mary's overcame tough resistance from St. Paul Highland in the semi-finals to advance. Marie Woodward served for 10 points in a row, including 5 aces. Alex Stephan led the team with 5 kills. Reese Bechtold added 4 kills, and Katherine Kamp had 3 kills.

In the final match-up, St. Mary's defeated an excellent team, St. Boniface, in 2 close sets to win the tournament. Izzy Brunaugh had 2 blocks, and setter Marie Woodward added a block. Several players contributed kills including Reese Bechtold with 3, Ellen Anderson 2, Ava Hernandez 2, and Alex Stephan and Mia Lopez with 1 each. Lopez also served for 9 points, including 5 aces.

"The difference between St. Mary's and the other conference teams is our depth. Although some players did not see action last night, the support of all 17 players has made this team the great team that it is. By far the hardest part of coaching is making the decision as to who will play in the key games because there is so much talent and they all deserve it," Phil Hamilton.

Pictured above from left to right in the back row is Kaylee Piar, defensive specialist; Ellen Anderson outside hitter; Marie Woodward, setter; Katherine Kamp, outside hitter; Mia Lopez, outside hitter; Lexi Taylor, defensive specialist/setter; Reese Bechtold, middle hitter; Izzy Brunaugh, middle hitter; Emma Hough, defensive specialist/outside hitter. In the front row is Colleen Meisenheimer, defensive specialist; Ella Curry, defensive specialist/libero; Bella Johnson, right side; Morgan Rister, defensive specialist/libero; Alex Stephan, outside hitter; Sarah Moehn, defensive specialist; and, Ava Hernandez, setter. The Chargers were missing Grace Fischer, setter/defensive specialist.

The Chargers are coached by Jill Woodward, Chrissy Certa, and Phil Hamilton.

