

Senior standouts lead the charge as Lady Mustangs continue area run

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KENNESAW - Kennesaw Mountain has clearly emerged as the most experienced team in a young Area 5AAAAA.

The fifth-ranked Lady Mustangs remained undefeated in area play after the whole roster contributed in senior night victories over Harrison (25-17, 25-13) and McEachern (25-8, 25-18) on Tuesday.

Last year's Class AAAAA state runner-up improved its overall record to 30-11 and 5-0 in 5AAAAA. The Lady Mustangs wrap up area play next week in a tri-match at North Cobb that also includes Pebblebrook.

"(Playing all the players) was my purpose," Kennesaw Mountain coach Tonya Kern-Honea said. "It was a good night for our seniors and I tried to get everyone in."

Lauren Hutchinson posted 23 kills and 2.5 blocks in her two matches to lead the Lady Mustangs. Mariah Booth added 15 kills and three aces while Kaylee McGrew posted 20 assists and Sarah Shaw led defensively with 11 digs.

Kennesaw Mountain's second game of its match against Harrison was closer than the score may have indicated. Harrison took an early lead and there were five ties and two lead changes.

But once Booth hit an ace to put the Lady Mustangs up, 13-12, there were only two sideouts the remainder of the match. A long service run by Booth gave Kennesaw Mountain a 16-13 lead before she faulted. But when Harrison's Tori Forrest couldn't rally on serve, McGrew served eight straight to preserve the victory.

Forrest went on to post six kills to lead the Lady Hoyas. Nicole Dun had 1.5 blocks and Claire Brummeler finished with 10 assists.

Hutchinson took over in Kennesaw Mountain's match against McEachern. She had more kills (11) in the first game than McGrew had assists (nine). Several of Hutchinson's kills came on free balls.

McEachern stepped up defensively in the second game and kept up until the Lady Mustangs jumped to a 22-15 lead on Hutchinson's serve. Kennesaw Mountain got Booth more involved offensively in the second game, where she came away with seven kills.

"We were trying to do different things with Mariah in the second game and it worked," Kern-Honea said. "She was hitting from different areas of the net and not just hitting in the middle."

The Lady Indians made one last stand late in the second game when Myaisha Nixon and Lakiva Smith combined for three straight kills to cut their deficit to 23-17 before two kills by Britta Gutherie ended it.

Davis and Ashley Cooper had four kills each to lead McEachern and Smith added six assists.