



Go West! Mikaela Morgan '15 waits to bump the ball to setter Maddie Fay '17 against Cedar Falls. "We reached our goal of making State, and I'm very proud of that," Morgan said.

PHOTO BY MIKHAINA HEARDS



Determined, Maddie Fay '17 and Emily Halverson '17 block Cedar Falls from scoring Oct. 7. "[Maddie] had to do a lot more blocking after she switched to setter," Halverson said.

PHOTO BY MIKHAINA HEARDS



Ready position, Madi Miller '15 anticipates the ball against Cedar Falls on Oct. 7. "We had a very young team, but everyone stepped up given the circumstances."

PHOTO BY MIKHAINA HEARDS



Quick on her feet, Madi Ford '17 passes the ball to the setter Oct. 21 against CR Prairie. "There were a lot of changes this season," Ford said, "the most important being our lineup."

PHOTO BY ANNA ZIMMERMAN



Spike! Laynie Whitehead '15 goes for the kill against CR Prairie on Oct. 21. "This season was a lot of fun towards the end."

PHOTO BY ANNA ZIMMERMAN



Point, West! Ali Trauchen '17, Jenna Mott '16 and Hannah Birt '16 celebrate a point scored against Bettendorf on Nov. 11. "We were successful," Birt said. "We had a lot of young talent teamed up with experienced players."

PHOTO BY MIKHAINA HEARDS

STORM THE COURT

Late win sends team to State

Crowding the stands at the U.S. Cellular Center on Nov. 11, West fans filed in to watch the team play in the State tournament for the first time since 2011. The girls were ready to face the No. 1 team in the state. "It was like a journey," hitter Laynie Whitehead '15 said. "We had a slow start, but as we kept playing, we got much better."

Early on, the young team directed its attention to fundamentals under new Coach Randy Dolson. "He had us focus on our mental toughness, and we worked a lot on fixing our errors in practice," back row hitter Madi Ford '17 said.

West struggled early, entering the Caroline Found Extravaganza on Sept. 13 with an 8-6 record. Without hitter Mikaela Morgan '15, who was taking the ACT, Dolson saw an opportunity to shake things up.

"[He] just said, 'OK, this isn't working,'" middle hitter Emily Halverson '17 said. "He changed the lineup, and it clicked."

Whitehead moved from setter to hitter, and Maddie Fay '17 took over the setter role.

"We had to evaluate where each individual is and plug them in," Dolson said. "The beginning of the season was an experiment."

That change proved to be effective. On Sept. 23, Cedar Rapids Kennedy won the first set against West, but the team battled back. Morgan broke a

23-23 tie in the fourth set with two kills, helping the Trojans win three straight sets.

"We didn't give up after the first set," hitter Anna Mabry '16 said. "We came back even stronger."

After a strong finish at the Des Moines Roosevelt Invite and a loss to Linn-Mar, West faced Cedar Falls. Both teams won two sets going into the fifth match. West fell, 17-19.

"We had trouble letting go of our mistakes," Whitehead said.

The team took those losses as a chance to improve. With senior leadership, they beat CR Prairie, 3-0. The ended the regular season 25-11.

"We focused on the other team's strengths and weaknesses to figure out what we needed to work on," Emma Norris '17 said.

In Pleasant Hill, West and No. 10 Southeast Polk were evenly matched. The team won all three sets, advancing to meet West Des Moines Valley.

"We played our best game ever," Mabry said.

The Women of Troy completed their second consecutive upset, beating the No. 6 team, 3-1.

"We had confidence," Dolson said. "It's where we wanted to be all along."

That led West to the match against No. 1 Bettendorf. After losing the first match, the Women of Troy shot to a 6-0 lead in the second match. They ended Bettendorf's 61-set winning streak, but fell short in the next two sets.

"They were more excited, and the nerves got to us," Ford said. "We broke down, and I feel like we didn't think we could do it."

West lost to Bettendorf, 1-3, at State on Nov. 11 but has high hopes for next season.

"We're going all the way to the championship," Halverson said.

—By Aileen Weeks

OUTCOMES	
Bettendorf Invite	2-1
CR Jefferson	3-0
Marshalltown Invite	3-2
City High	2-3
Caroline Found Extravaganza	2-2
Dubuque Senior	3-0
CR Kennedy	3-1
Des Moines Roosevelt Invite	6-0
Linn-Mar	2-3
Cedar Falls	2-3
CR Jefferson Invite	5-1
Dubuque Walhert	3-0
MVC Tour	2-2
CR Prairie	3-0
Muscatine	3-0
Southeast Polk	3-0
West Des Moines Valley	3-1
Bettendorf	1-3

Set up for spike, Maddie Fay '17 sets the ball up against Bettendorf on Nov. 11. "I had to be much more confident as a setter," Fay said.

Defense! Emily Halverson '17 gets ready to block against Cedar Falls. "[Coach Dolson] helped us improve a lot."



PHOTO BY MIKHAINA HEARDS



Point, West High! Madi Miller '15 and Ali Trauchen '17 celebrate a point scored against Cedar Falls on Oct. 7. West fell to Cedar Falls 2-3.

PHOTO BY MIKHAINA HEARDS



PHOTO BY MIKHAINA HEARDS