

Dean commits to EIU

By Daniel L. Chamness
Volleyball is not only a sport among the Dean Family, it is simply a way of life. Kate Dean had many, many schools courting her to continue her career. But, none of those were as close to home or her heart, as it was quickly discovered, as Eastern Illinois University. On Wednesday, March 30, the Tuscola middle blocker/hitter, made it official and signed with the EIU Panthers to continue her academic and athletic career. She had previously verbally committed to the University of North Dakota, but she de committed from them late in 2021. "Eastern Illinois stole my heart when I visited because of the culture," said Dean. "On my visit to the school, I had a chance to spend some one-on-one time with the women that will be my teammates. They were so genuine and fun to be around. Coach (Sara Thomas) also won me over. She is such an easy person to communicate with and is very caring. Her plans for the future of EIU Volleyball was laid out. She told me how she plans to reach those goals and it made me really want to be a part of the Panther journey the next few years." Dean selected the Panthers over Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville, Southeast Missouri State University, Indiana State University and University of Memphis. She becomes the second of the Dean siblings to play college

volleyball. Her older sister Karli Dean is currently a member of the University of Missouri-St. Louis volleyball team. Her mother (Keri Dean) also has coached volleyball in the past. "Playing on the same court with my older sister was one of the best things about playing volleyball at Tuscola," said Dean. "I loved sharing the court with her. The toughest part was we did not always get the results we desired. That did not stop us from working hard and coming to practice or a match with an optimistic attitude. In her final year of volleyball, she finished with 194 kills and had a .372 hitting percentage. Both were team high stats. She also finished the 2021-2022 season with 52 blocks and 30 service aces. She finished her career with 712 kills, the career record at Tuscola. Her older sister is second on the career kill list with 669. Dean, who is 6-foot-2, started earning awards almost from the moment she stepped on the volleyball court. She was named a second team all-conference pick in the Central Illinois Conference as a freshman. She would be selected to the all-conference team three more times, all three times being picked as a first teamer. Twice, she was selected unanimously. As a junior, in the shortened season she was named to the all-league team. Mere months later, she would garner every coaches vote in

the league to get all-conference in the fall of 2021. Her teammates at Tuscola selected her as the Lady Warrior Most Valuable Player both as a junior and senior. In addition, she earned the offensive award both years. The senior would be selected to numerous all-state teams and all-region teams, including the American Volleyball Coaches Association Region VI team and the all-state team. "The Tuscola community was so supportive of me as an athlete," said Dean. "I want to extend my thanks to everyone that supported me. My friends, family, teammates and coaches showered me with knowledge, love and support my entire life. I would not have been able to accomplish the things that I have without everyone's help and support. I am forever grateful." When she was not pounding down kills or throwing up a block for the Lady Warriors and Coach Lydia Miller, the future NCAA Division I player was busy honing her skills on various club teams. At the age of nine, she started suiting up for Prime Time Volleyball Club in Champaign. After suiting up for them for seven years, she began suiting up for the Illini Elite, which is based in Bloomington. She is currently on the Illini Elite 18 Cardinal team. The daughter of Brian and Keri Dean of Tuscola is undecided on a college major at this time. During her prep academic career at Tuscola, she has



KATE DEAN (center, seated) inks her letter of intent with Eastern Illinois University, flanked by her mother (Keri Dean, left) and father (Brian Dean, right). Standing are her grandmother (Karen Huff), her older sister (Karli Dean, center) and grandfather (Mark Huff). Photo by Daniel L. Chamness.

compiled a grade point average of 4.0 and has been named an Illinois State Scholar. In addition, away from the volleyball court, she was named the Tuscola Community High School Rotary Student of the Month for January 2022 and in 2021, she was honored by the American Volleyball Coaches Associ-

ation as one of their Best and Brightest Award Recipient. "I am going to miss seeing my cat Todd day to day, but fortunately I am close enough to travel home and visit him," said Dean. "I will miss suiting up with the women I grew up with. Also, looking over and seeing the student section

cheering and going crazy for us. Personally, I want to concentrate on my grades in college and earn all-conference honors in the Ohio Valley Conference. Team wise, I want to help them win matches, win the OVC Tournament and advance to the NCAA Division I Tournament."



ELLA MAXFIELD, 15, a resident of Tuscola and a freshman at Tuscola High School, swam at the 2022 YMCA Short Course Nationals swim meet. This week-long meet was held at the Greensboro Aquatic Center in Greensboro, N.C., from March 28 through April 1 and was the first YMCA national level meet since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Participation at Nationals is based on meeting qualifying time requirements set forth by the YMCA. Ella qualified for 5 events: 100, 200, and 500 Freestyle and 100 and 200 Butterfly. She swims year-round with the Champaign County Heat YMCA swim club. Twelve members of the Heat team qualified for Nationals and the team finished in 8th place overall. Submitted photo.

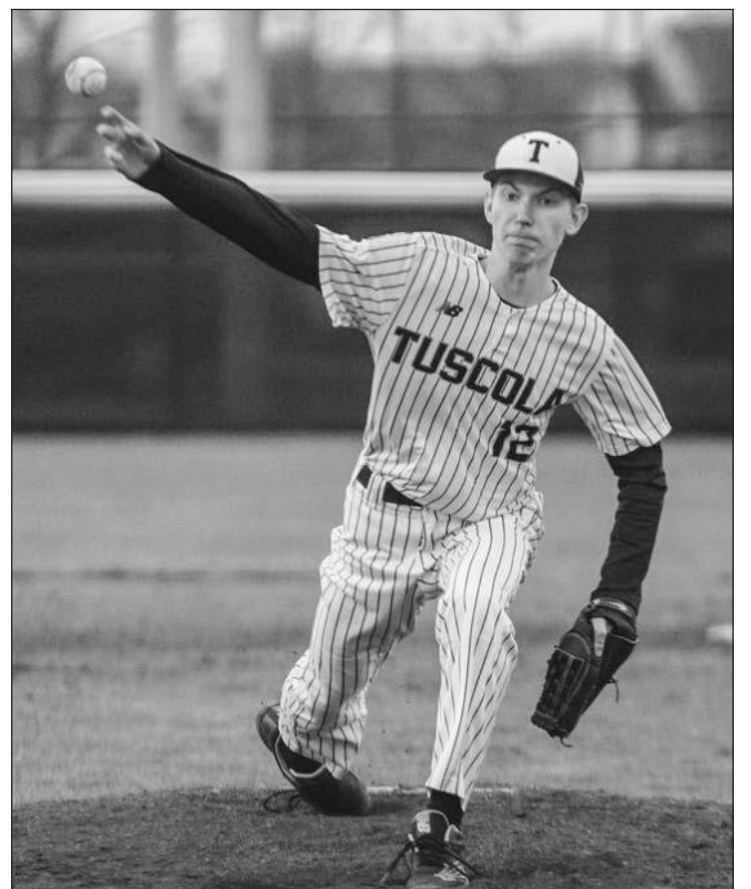
Warriors return three All-Conference players

By Daniel L. Chamness
For the first time since 2019, the spring sports will start at a normal time, with a normal schedule and a normal finish. Tuscola head coach Adam Carver, for one, one of many to be sure, is happy about that. "The pandemic that the entire country and world has made me appreciate things we took for granted before," said Carver. "I think every moment on a baseball field is a blessing, regardless of whether the pandemic is going on or not. This is the greatest game every created. As far the students, I think it helps these kids to get back to a normal routine, where they can go to school without a mask, ride on a bus without a mask and hang out with their friends without second guessing if it is the right thing to do. That carries over to the baseball diamond, where they can come out and play the game and have fun playing." The Warriors not only have fun playing, they have fun winning. In a 19-game season one year ago, the Warriors were 11-8 overall and 109-04 in the Central Illinois Conference. Colton Musgrave, who earned the batting title with a .350 batting average one year ago, was a CIC honorable mention pick in 2021. He was not the only one returning with all-conference accolades from one year ago. Peyton Armstrong and Patrick Pierce, who also were honor-

able mention picks, return to the Warrior lineup as well. "Patrick and Peyton, along with Easton (Cunningham) and Dylan (Shinn) will be our top four pitchers," said Carver. "They have shown the ability to get outs and will be the key for this entire season. We usually relying more on our pitching to get us deep into the postseason. This year, our offense might play a bigger role. We want to get better everyday and be a complete team by regional. We would like to win our conference and at least get a regional title this year." Caden Baer was also a key member of the 2021 team and returns for his senior season. Carver has stated that Austin Cummings and Chase Jones have both looked really good in practice as well. "I believe we will have to score some runs early to win games," said Carver. "By the end of the season, I believe we have some pitchers step up and be able to limit some good lineups towards the end of the year. Our defense needs to improve drastically over the next two months." Athletes that graduated included Ben Tiezzi, Dalton Addis, Cole Cunningham, Nate Koester, Grant Hardwick, Rohan Patel and Tytus Rentrant. "Those young men brought some leadership to the program," said Carver. "Ben and Cole were our top two pitchers and Dalton had a great year for

us both offensively and defensively." Like most high school athletic teams in the area, the weather has been playing havoc with their schedules. So far, the Warriors have had either eight cancellations or postponements since March 15. They have played in seven games, posting a 1-6 mark. If the weather holds up this week, the Warriors will play five games, starting today, all at home. They are scheduled to

play Tuesday through Saturday. On Tuesday, March 12, they will be on the road at St. Teresa. "We have lost two really close games this week to Clinton and Neoga," said Carver. "Our pitching has been great, but we did not make enough plays to win those games. Our bats are starting to come around, but we need to be more aggressive at the plate with runners in scoring position."



DYLAN SHINN PITCHES one home. Shinn is a senior member of the team. Photo by Daniel L. Chamness.



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