

SPORTS

Arcola volleyball improves to 2-1 with three-game win over Neoga

By Mike Monahan

ARCOLA - For the first time since 2016 the Arcola volleyball team beat Neoga on Aug. 29 winning 25-17, 20-25, 25-15 to improve to 2-1 on the young season.

Neoga had won the last four matches (did not play in 2021 or 2020).

"The girls did a great job keeping their energy up in match 1 and 3," said Arcola coach Katy Whisman. "Beating Neoga gives them more confidence and hopefully the motivation to start conference play strong!"

The Lincoln Prairie Conference starts Sept. 6 with

the Lady Riders playing host to Cerro Gordo/Bement. The non-conference rival match between Tuscola and Arcola originally scheduled for Sept. 4 was postponed to Sept. 13 due to forecasted intense heat on Sept. 1.

In the second set Arcola's Kiera Leal served six points, including two aces as Arcola took a 15-10 lead. However, the Lady Indians answered with seven straight points of their own on serves by Brynn Richards, including an ace and a tip and kill by Natalie O'Dell. Arcola was still within two, 21-19, after an ace by Kelsey Moore. However, Neoga scored

four of the final five points for the win as Richards had another kill.

"Starting strong in the third set was very important so we could keep rolling to the end," said Whisman.

That is exactly what Arcola did in the third set as Ava Simpson served the first two and Jacey Kessler four for a 6-1 advantage. The Lady Riders led by at least five the rest of the way, including 14-9 when a service error gave Simpson the serve. Simpson had two aces out to her four points for a 19-9 advantage. Kacie Sisk's kill ended the match with a win by 10. Simpson had all

three of her aces in the decisive third set.

"Coach (Whisman) did not give me any numbers to serve at," said Ava Simpson. "I just scan the court to see where everyone is at. I try and hit it where no one is at and that makes it a lot harder for them to get. I have been practicing my jump serve. It is the first year I have done the jump serve."

Simpson had a team-high 17 assists.

"I would say being loud on the court and just knowing where the hitters like their sets and where to place it in the time of a really close

game," said Simpson of keys to being a good setter.

Arcola led the entire first set, including six points by Sisk, who had an ace and Moore had a tip for a 15-7 lead.

"Moore and Sisk were our top defenders with 18 and 15 digs each," said Whisman. "They were great defenders."

Sisk had a team-high nine kills, while Moore had four of the 11 aces and Kessler had the lone block.

"This group of girls on the floor is such a good group of girls," said Simpson. "We know we can win more games and be more successful than last

year. We need to keep communicating. Neoga is a good team. Knowing we have good hitters and just out hustling them and out hitting them is really a good feeling."

Arcola def. Neoga 25-17, 20-25, 25-15

ARCOLA: Ava Simpson 3 aces, 17 assists, 6 digs; Crystal Ramirez 4 digs; Ema Simpson 2 kills, 3 digs; Jacey Kessler 4 kills, 1 block, 3 digs; Kacie Sisk 2 aces, 9 kills, 15 digs; Kesley Moore 4 aces, 4 kills, 1 assist, 18 digs; Kiera Leal 2 aces, 3 kills, 1 assist, 10 digs

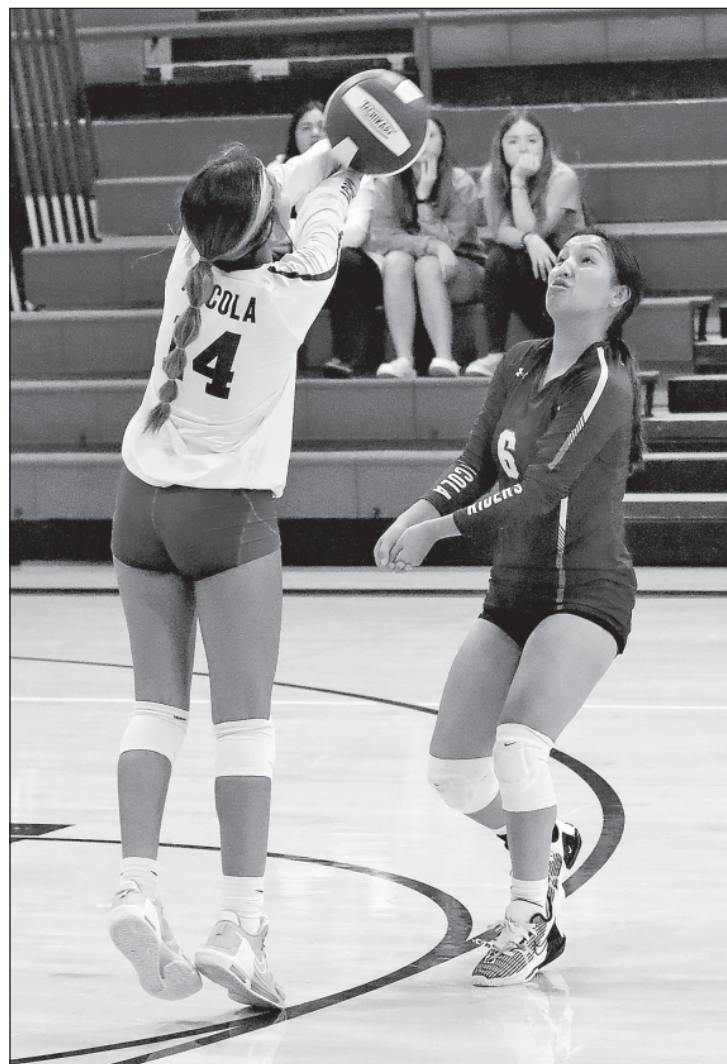
JV: Neoga def. Arcola 25-18, 25-23



Kiera Leal (9). Photo by Nancy Rairden.



Shelby Roberts-McGeehon (15). Photo by Nancy Rairden.



Crystal Ramirez (24) and Melani Martinez (6). Photo by Nancy Rairden.

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