

# Mercy's Emerson earns All-Observer honors

## ALL-AREA GIRLS VOLLEYBALL

### 1996 ALL-OBSERVER GIRLS VOLLEYBALL TEAM

**FIRST TEAM:** Heather Wohlfell, senior middle hitter, Bedford Thurston; Brandy Malewski, junior middle hitter, Bedford Thurston; Amber Wells, senior setter, Plymouth Canton; Theresa Arciero, senior outside hitter, Livonia Churchill; Stacy Judd, senior middle hitter, Livonia Ladywood; Erin LeSage, senior outside hitter, Livonia Ladywood; Nicole Vondracek, junior setter, Livonia Ladywood; Jamesa Emerson, senior outside hitter, Farmington Hills Mercy; Shellye Sills, senior middle hitter, Plymouth Salem; Kim Sheldon, senior outside hitter, Plymouth Salem; Karissa Socia, senior outside hitter, Plymouth Salem; Kristi DiBasio, senior outside hitter, Livonia Stevenson.

**SECOND TEAM:** Sheyanne Moots, senior, Farmington Hills Mercy; Jessica Orleman, junior, Plymouth Canton; Heather Perkins, senior, North Farmington; Heather Barber, senior, Bedford Union; Nikki Righlinger, senior, Westland Huron Valley Lutheran; Jenni Talbot, junior, Garden City.

**THIRD TEAM:** Lauren Wright, senior, Bedford Union; Kelly Ashworth, senior, Livonia Churchill; Karen Spingewies, senior, Plymouth Salem; Beth Jones, senior, Farmington Hills Mercy; Danielle Shels, freshman, Livonia Clarencville; Sarah Poglia, sophomore, Livonia Ladywood.

**HONORABLE MENTION:** Kim Lucas, Jenny O'Connor, Michelle Yecko, Heather White, Bedford Thurston; Kristi Drunkhahn, Ann Alisto, Nikki Kouachevich, Plymouth Canton; Jenny Szal, Taisha Kieft, Bedford Union; Lori Leszczynski, Megan McGinty, Livonia Churchill; Colleen Wutke, Holly Freis, Jenny Woody, Garden City; Michelle Ruth, Westland Huron Valley Lutheran; Gina Palmeri, Nicole Tabin, Catherine Garry, Laura Krol, Stacy Nichols, Julie Richardson, Livonia Stevenson; Melissa Wolvin, Randi Vee, Janine Boeman, Amanda Ricotta, Livonia Franklin; Nicole Van Hees, Jenny Trost, Amanda Abraham, Karl Flynn, Plymouth Salem; Erin Moug, Gail Agacinski, Heidi Wahl, Farmington Hills Mercy; Shannon Swish, Jessica Geras, Jill Wilson, Cathy Hermann, Kristen Dause, Kacie Brogan, Livonia Ladywood; Chrissy Hartless, Jamie Romig, Jennifer Smith, Westland John Glenn; Abby Ault, Sara Kloosterman, Erika Greene, Farmington Hills Harrison; Kim Washnuck, Amanda Porter, Jenisee Hale, Farmington; Laura Nelson, Lee Nelson, Tricia Trascy, Emily Oeferman, North Farmington; Stephanie Louisa, Jessica Rohr, Lauren Mackie, Kathleen Hish, Bedford St. Agatha; Taniqua Brumfield, Elisha Charles, Bedford Bishop Burgess.

Shortly after being told over the telephone that she was Observerland's Coach of the Year in girls volleyball this season, Cindy Riley started thanking the people at Bedford Thurston that helped make it happen.

Riley began crediting her players and coaching staff for making her first year as varsity coach a memorable one when her husband, Jim Riley, quipped in the background, "How about an understatement about your husband?"

"That's really, really true," she said. "I think I cooked dinner twice this season."

As Thurston's junior varsity coach the last eight years, Riley felt most rewarded when watching some of her former players become standouts on the varsity.

The Eagles won their first-ever Class B regional before bowing out of the state tournament with a 4-16, 6-16 loss to Marysville in the quarterfinal at Mattawan High School near Kalamazoo.

The Eagles, who have won the last four district titles, were Mega Conference White Division champions and finished 39-10-4 overall.

Riley's JV teams at Thurston never had a losing record. Before that, she coached at Pierce Junior High School while attending college and playing volleyball at U-M Dearborn.

Riley cited team unity and the cooperation of assistant coaches Laura Kress and Lynda Ellul for the Eagles' success this year.

The Thurston players are standouts in the classroom as well, boasting an accumulative grade point average of 3.4. Five of Riley's seniors are graduating with honors.

Livonia Ladywood joined Thurston as Observerland's other quarterfinal qualifier, reaching that far in the Class A tournament before losing to eventual runner-up Temperance Bedford.

Ladywood recorded one of the more memorable comebacks of the year, recovering from a 3-2 deficit in the regional final against Plymouth Salem before winning 16-14.

The Blazers and Rocks lead the way with three players on the All-Observer first team. Thurston has two, while the remaining four spots are shared by four schools.

Farmington Hills Mercy senior hitter Jamesa Emerson joins Salem's Shellye Sills and Livonia Ladywood senior Erin LeSage as repeat first-team selections.

#### FIRST TEAM

**Kristi DiBasio, senior, Stevenson:** The team captain was voted the Spartans' best offensive player by her teammates after recording 268 kills in 762 attempts and a serve percentage of .95, completing 340 of 358 deliveries.

She also was effective on defense, establishing a school record mark of 90 percent in serve reception (338 out of 374).

"We relied heavily on her as far as her abilities," Stevenson coach Kelly Graham said. "She was a very smart player who knows how to put the ball. That's what made her effective."

**Stacy Judd, senior, Ladywood:** The four-year varsity team member who carries a 4.0 grade point average was named the Blazers' Most Valuable Player. She had the Blazers' most kills (374) and highest kill percentage (.274). She finished with 67 total blocks, 223 digs and 223 serve receive passes with 66 serving aces.

"Stacy impressed me the most by how she made a big contribution to the regional championship in her weakest area—serving, and during a match where the team was not serving well," coach Tom Teeters said. "Stacy's trademarks were the hard-line shots from the right or left side and her effortless passing style."

**Nicole Vondracek, junior, Ladywood:** A varsity starter since her freshman year, Vondracek made a smooth adjustment from hitter to setter this season. She finished with 695 assists in 1,953 attempts for an average of 6.0 per game.

Vondracek had 187 digs and only 12 errors with 115 good serve receptions. She collected 61 aces, while also accounting for 48 kills in 145 attempts (a hitting percentage of .414).

"Nicole put in a lot of hard work and extra time," Teeters said. "With Nicole's versatility she has been able to take primary pass position, middle back on defense or the outside hitting positions. Nicole's strength comes from her work ethic in practice and the example she sets."

**Erin LeSage, senior, Ladywood:** LeSage will be remembered mostly for her superb spin-curve serve, but that's just a small part of what she has contributed to the Ladywood program the last four years on the varsity.

She recorded more than 300 aces the last two years, including 160 this season, but she also had 252 kills, 239 assists, 86 total blocks, 229 receiving passes and 102 digs as a senior.

She had a hitting percentage of .210 while becoming a repeat selection on the All-Observer first team.

"Erin's serving added stress to our opponents' serve receive patterns and gave our offense some easy scoring opportunities," Teeters said. "Erin has also added to many areas of our offense by stepping into a setting role as well as attacking from all three front-row positions and sometimes back row spiking. Her contributions will be missed."

**Jamesa Emerson, senior, Mercy:** A three-year varsity starter, Emerson averaged 6.7 kills per match as a senior, recording 402 out of 1,089 attempts.

She had 65 aces, converting 84 percent of her serves, and also had 306 total serve receptions.

Emerson, who had 63 solo stuff blocks and passed at 80 percent efficiency, will attend Middle Tennessee State on a full-ride scholarship. She is a repeat first-team selection.

Jamesa is an outstanding hitter and all-around player," Mercy coach Peggy Spengler said. "Her focus sets the pace for the team. She has been our No. 1 hitter for two consecutive seasons and a driving force on Mercy varsity volleyball for three years. We will miss her power and fun, but pray that success and good health will stay with her in the future."

**Heather Wohlfell, senior, Thurston:** Wohlfell, who didn't start playing volleyball until her sophomore year, certainly made up for lost time. Wohlfell, a second-team All-Observer choice in basketball, was the Eagles' co-Most Valuable Player after finishing with a team-high 271 kills, 34 in the state tournament, and 216 target-area digs (at 46 percent).

Of Wohlfell's kills, 84 came on blocks. The Youngstown State University-bound Wohlfell also had 61 aces.

"Heather's commitment and her natural athletic ability has led her to be one of the most intimidating hitters in our area," coach Cindy Riley said. "She is also an effective defensive player. Youngstown State is very lucky."

**Brandy Malewski, junior, Thurston:** Malewski was the Eagles' top all-around player who became especially efficient in the post-season.

She was second on the Eagles with 268 kills, including a team-high 43 in five state playoff matches. She finished with 203 target-area digs and added 76 service aces, which also were a team high, while contributing 35 assists.

Malewski serve received at 44 percent in the target area.



Jamesa Emerson  
Mercy



Kristi DiBasio  
Stevenson



Shellye Sills  
Salem



Erin LeSage  
Ladywood



Theresa Arciero  
Churchill



Stacy Judd  
Ladywood



Heather Wohlfell  
Thurston



Nicole Vondracek  
Ladywood



Amber Wells  
Canton



Brandy Malewski  
Thurston



Karissa Socia  
Salem



Kim Sheldon  
Salem

"Brandy is one of the most well-rounded volleyball players that Thurston has ever had," Riley said. "She is an excellent server, setter and attacker and her defense is top-notch. Best of all, she'll be back next season."

**Theresa Arciero, senior, Churchill:** The two-year scholar athlete led the Chargers with a serve percentage of 95.6 and 68 aces. She had a passing percentage of 92.4, which was second on the team, and only 24 errors in 36 attempts. She finished with 108 kills, with 466 good attacks out of 504 attempts, and 306 digs.

"Theresa was both the catalyst and the glue which helped Churchill to its 28-12 season," Churchill coach Mike Hughes said. "She was our best all-around player and unquestioned leader. Theresa's work ethic and competitive nature epitomized Churchill volleyball."

**Amber Wells, senior, Canton:** Wells kept busy, recording 318 assists in 1,356 attempts. She also led the Chiefs with 289 digs and found time to contribute 129 kills with 73 aces.

"Amber is the prototype of setters," Canton coach Steve Anderson said. "She not only has all the skills with the offensive part of the game, but she also has defense and serving down to a science. She will be a very strong player as a freshman."

**Kim Sheldon, senior, Salem:** Sheldon helped the Rocks to another Class A district championship and regional final, leading the way with 291 digs. She had 87 aces, including a serve percentage of .94, and finished with 148 kills.

She carries a 3.75 GPA. "As one of the captains, Kim

worked hard keeping this team together and focused," Salem coach Allie Suffity said. "She committed herself to Salem volleyball to be an example of what we are all about. She is a team player. Kim has been one of my favorite young people to know and work with."

**Shellye Sills, senior, Salem:** The four-year letterwinner leaves Salem with records for kills in a career (1,312) and season (507 in 1995-96) and blocks for a career (821) and season (217 in 94-95). She is a repeat selection on the first team after gaining third team honors as a sophomore.

The University of Toledo-bound Sills also contributed 200 blocks, 233 digs and a 92 serving percentage with 92 aces. Her serve reception was 86.2 percent. "Shellye is one of the hardest working athletes I have ever worked with," Suffity said. "Her hard work and dedication have been an example for all of her teammates and indicative of all her accolades, including a college scholarship."

**Karissa Socia, senior, Salem:** Socia became a force at the net for the Rocks, recording 352 kills. She had 171 digs and a serve percentage of 94.1 with 47 aces.

The 3.95 GPA student is a three-year letterwinner whose patience paid off before getting a chance to shine as a senior.

"Karissa is a true-program player, she waited four years to be a contributor," Suffity said. "She got her chance, took advantage of it by being a starter and an offensive threat as an outside hitter who could go down line as well as cross-court."

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