



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL DEERER

Defensive effort: Mercy senior Mary Gignac keeps the ball alive with a pass Tuesday in the Marlins' match with Ladywood. Mercy beat the Blazers for the first time since the early part of the decade with 15-11, 15-10 victories on its home court.

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blockers up front to take Jenny out," Moeller said. "Jenny got some points, but she's capable of taking over a game and she didn't do that."

"When we had the opportunity, we took it to them and made them make the mistakes," Brankiewicz said. "We didn't play wild. We went for it, so they couldn't get good passes and set it up."

The Blazers had a 3-2 lead in the first game, but the Marlins scored the next four and took the lead with Meghan O'Connor's three service points — two of which resulted from Jarzembowski kills.

Mercy went out to a 10-6 lead, with Gignac serving a pair of aces; however, Ladywood closed to 10-9 and 12-11 but couldn't put the brakes on Mercy's momentum. Amy Miller served the final three points, with Brankiewicz smashing kills for the 13th and 15th.

"We were ready to come out here and play," Gignac said. "I just think we're all so committed, and we do what we have to do for the team. This team is so united."

"We really prepared for (Young). I thought we had a pretty good block on her. When

she did get a hit, we were able to dig it up. I think they got frustrated when we were able to shut them down. Then we came back at them, and we didn't hold anything back."

Ladywood took a 5-0 lead in the second game, and it looked as the Blazers had begun to straighten out their game and turn the tide.

"But their momentum was hard to break," Wyatt said. "We never had the ball enough, never had enough control. It doesn't matter how good your hitters are if you can't set them."

"(The Marlins) were passing and running their offense, and we couldn't get the ball on target. We never took their crowd out of it, and that kept playing into their hands."

Mercy scored the next 12 points to take command of the game and their destiny. Kelly Blunden served the first four, including three aces, and Brankiewicz the next five, as Ladywood errors accounted for three. O'Connor and Nikie Downing (two points) served one ace each.

The Blazers attempted another rally, making it 14-10 with four service points by Rebekah Thornton. But O'Connor and

Brankiewicz forced Ladywood sideouts with kills, and Blunden served an ace for the final point. "When we got on a run, we pulled it together," Brankiewicz said. "We really hadn't had to come from behind and, to be able to do that against a team like Ladywood, was a big step for us."


"Before, we would've just collapsed and shut down in that game. Instead, we stayed focused on what we wanted to achieve. We went for it and got it."

Moeller believes his players have the right attitude to match their talent now.

"The key for us has been intensity in practice," he said. "The team no longer accepts people doing things half way."

"Last year we had a shot at beating (Ladywood) and let them off the hook. That's when we understood it's a practice thing. 'I'll never say we're all the way there until we're off 20 in a row. Now we have to do it every day, and that's the practice intensity."

"I think this our year," Gignac said. "I think we're ready to go a long way. Coming out here and playing as a team, I think we're proving it to everyone else."




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