

Kearney edges Mooney in Private-Parochial League battle

Win snaps Cardinals' 58-match winning streak in all-Catholic division

By Richard A. Kiley

While winter was reacquainting itself with upstate New York last Thursday night with the first significant snowfall of the season, the Bishop Kearney girls' volleyball team was presenting Cardinal Mooney with its first Private-Parochial League loss in 59 matches.

The heated battle between the two Catholic rivals was extended to five games with the Lady Fighting Kings prevailing 13-15, 15-11, 16-14, 13-15, 15-13.

Coach Paul Coppini's squad snapped the Mooney streak thanks to the serving of junior Chris Novocilsky and the inspired play of senior Molly Dillon.

"Chris has really proven herself. She just served phenomenally," said Coppini, who has coached the girls at Kearney for eight years and the boys for 10. "She's not a very vocal player, but in practice, most of the girls don't like to return her serves."

Neither did Mooney. The junior served 13 aces over the marathon match, including strings of six in both the third and fourth games.

Dillon made her presence felt with 12 points spiking for the Lady Fighting Kings. Dillon and senior Jill Kress, a setter, are the "two old ladies on the team," according to Coppini.

"Molly moved to hitter this year; she had been setter last year," said Coppini, who teaches English at the school. Dillon and Kress are the two co-captains for Kearney. "They're seniors, so it's do or die for them."

After losing the first game, Kearney jumped out to an 8-3 lead in the second only to let the Cardinals back in the contest with some sloppy play. Coppini and his squad then had to endure some scary moments soon after, when one of the Lady Fighting Kings' most aggressive players, Tedi Walsh, crashed to the floor and appeared seriously hurt. The transfer student from Wayne County returned, however, and helped her team take the second game 15-11.

"She (Walsh) is without a doubt the most aggressive player on the team," Coppini said. "She's the person at the net you go to when you need a point."

The third game of the match was the most exciting, as Kearney won a see-saw battle 16-14. The Lady Fighting Kings appeared to have things well in hand as they led 13-8. Mooney's Mary Beth Prognio, however, then aided her team with some nifty serving and defensive play to pull the Cardinals to within one, 13-12. Sophomore Cheryl Lennox then evened the match with a perfect set from Tracy Schmidt.

But Kearney's Marian Baer and Novocilsky closed the door on Mooney with some strong serving to capture the win.

The third-game loss appeared to take a lot out of Mooney as it found itself down in the fourth game 12-4. But the substitute Joan Graham inspired her teammates, and Mooney once again came back to tie the game at 13-13. Graham then served her team two consecutive aces to even the match at two games each.

Coppini must have thought he was experiencing *deja-vu* after the fourth game got away. His squad fell to Mooney several times last year when matches were extended to five games.

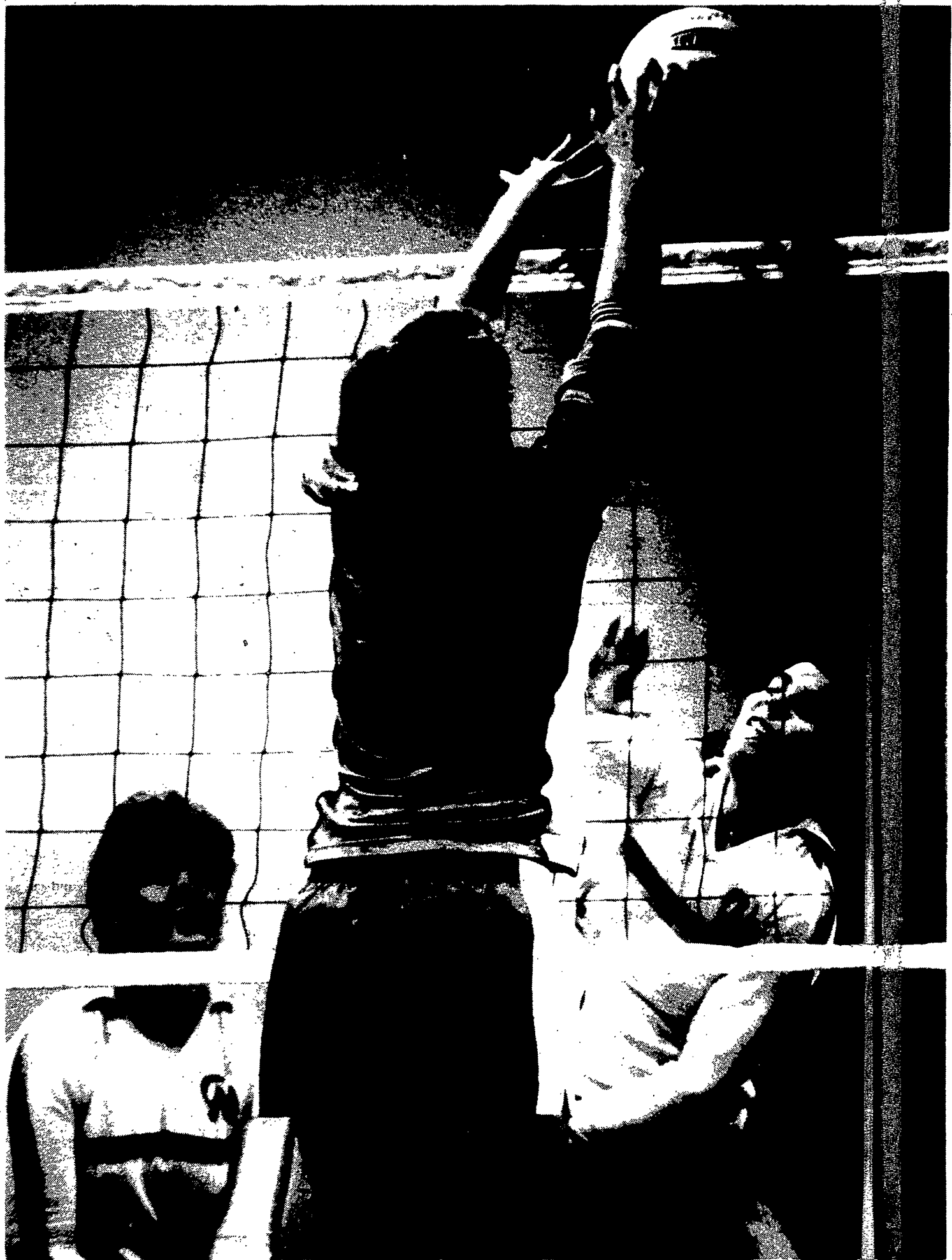
"We had some lapses in the fourth game," Coppini said. "I didn't know what to expect in the fifth game."

In the final game, Dillon served her team to a 3-0 lead but that was erased when Mooney's Lisa Brunette served her teammates to a 7-4 lead.

Strong defense by Kearney down the stretch played a key role, though, as the team rallied from a 13-12 deficit to capture the win.

And who was serving but Novocilsky when the winning point was scored for the Lady Fighting Kings.

Thirteen-year coach Joette Abbey down-



Jeff Goulding/Courier Journal

Tedi Walsh (#19) of Bishop Kearney blocks a shot from Mooney players Tracy Schmidt, left, and Teri Lamphron, right.

played the pressure from the winning streak as the reason for the loss. She attributed the defeat to her team's lack of execution in key situations.

"I just feel we lacked in experience," said Abbey, who also coaches girls' softball in the spring. "Half my team has experience dealing with the pressure (of playing in tight games) while others don't. We were hot and cold."

Abbey graduated three players from last year's sectional semifinalist squad, and said it will take time for this year's squad to develop.

"I've got the talent, there were just times (Thursday) when we couldn't score a point," said Abbey, who lost Wendy Georgakis, Julie Staub and Mary O'Reilly to graduation. "It's just a matter of time before we get things together. They (her players) have to learn to work with one another."

Abbey is not panicking though.

"We have the potential to do a lot of nice things this year," Abbey said. "They (her players) know what they have to do. The talent is there; we'll just take things one game at a time."

Coppini, on the other hand, was happy to see his squad stave off yet another Mooney comeback.

"I've got real nice kids, and sometimes they lack the killer instinct," Coppini said. "They have to be assertive. We have the tendency to let our concentration slip. That was the story of our last season. Mooney once came back after we had them down 2-0 (in games)."

Both Abbey and Coppini are somewhat miffed over the decision by Rochester-area officials to move girls' volleyball to another time in the school year. Coppini, who left coaching girls and then came back to coach

the group he has now, said he may be leaving the volleyball program at Kearney. He may be left with the decision of whether to coach boys or girls if the sports are to take place at the same time.

"The sport has never been given any major consideration in the area," Coppini said. "It (volleyball) hasn't really caught on in the (Rochester) area. It's kind of the Rodney Dangerfield of high school sports."

Abbey agrees. "I'm very discouraged. I feel, though they are trying to dissolve the (girls') program," Abbey said. "I think they (Section 5 officials) should decide where it's going to be and just let it be."

Both Cardinal Mooney and Bishop Kearney, as well as Nazareth and Mercy, will be on hand this Saturday for the annual Lady Cardinal Tournament at St. John Fisher College in Rochester. Teams from Buffalo, Syracuse and Rochester will be battling it out from 9 a.m. to late Saturday afternoon.

McQuaid junior-varsity soccer finishes season undefeated

Hats off to the 1986 McQuaid junior varsity soccer team which completed its season with a record of 15-0-1 under Coach Dan Scheid.

Among the many highlights for the

Knights were a 4-3 overtime win over Pittsford Sutherland in the first game of the season; a come-from-behind, 5-3 win against Pittsford Mendon; and a 6-0 romp over Fairport.

Of the 15 Knight wins, nine were shutouts. McQuaid gave up an average of less than one goal per game (.68).

The McQuaid junior varsity soccer team consisted of: Bill Thomas, Mike Boychuk, Kevin Murphy, Jay Finigan, Benjy Shaw, Greg McMahon, Dan Wilmot, Tom Hanley,

Mark Paris, Jerry Concar, John Steinbrenner, Chris Kowal, Matt Parrinello, Brian Clark, Tom Miller, Shawn Maier, Mike Bishop, Jim Sobieraj, Tom Sclaera, Kirk Preston, Chris Mehringer, Dave Solazzo, Eric Shea, Kevin Walsh and Steve Ramsey.