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Stephens College volleyball team finishes what it starts in 3-0 win over Cottey College

COLUMBIA, Mo. — Finish it.

Two words. Simplistic in nature, but carry a lot of weight as troubles finishing matches had plagued the Stephens College volleyball team all season.

“We’ve had a tendency all season long where later in matches we stall out a little bit,” Stars coach Shane McAfee said. “We’ve been scoring 18, 19 points a game and then kind of lose focus for whatever reason.

Case in point, the Stars jumped out to early leads in each game of a recent match against Hannibal LaGrange only to have the Lady Trojans rally and sweep the match in three games.

Friday against Cottey College the game plan was to ensure that Stephens “mentally stayed” in the contest. However, early on in the match, it seemed like déjà vu all over again for the Stars despite constant reminders to each other to “finish it.”

Stephens took an early lead against the Comets only to see them rally in game one. Trailing 6-10, Stephens rode a strong serve by Lanie Hurt to regain the lead, 15-12, and held on for 25-20 win, propelling the Stars (2-7) to a sweep in straight sets over Cottey, 3-0 (25-20, 25-17, 25-10). Hurt finished the contest with eight service aces.

Senior Megan Sheffield and junior Kelsie Byrd were beasts in the middle for the Starts, hammering out 16 and 15 kills, respectively.

“They just dominated,” McAfee said of the pair of middle hitters. “Cottey just didn’t have the size to stop that attack. All season long that has been our only attack, but knowing it’s coming and stopping it are two different things.”

In addition to the one-two punch in the middle, McAfee praised the team’s overall passing in the match. “It all starts with passing,” McAfee said. “(Byrd and Sheffield) offensively were our stars but defensively the passing as a team was pretty good.”

Chrissy Echeverria led Stephens with 14 digs while Kelsey Benson tallied 13 and Hurt added 11.

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