

MADONNA UNIVERSITY VOLLEYBALL**MADONNA UNIVERSITY
SPORTS INFORMATION**

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CRUSADERS STAY PERFECT, WIN CONFERENCE TOURNAMENT

LIVONIA, MI. -- The Madonna volleyball team improved to 42-0 on the season with a 3-1 victory Saturday over Cornerstone, thus claiming the WHAC tournament championship. Natalja Tinina was unstoppable for the Crusaders, connecting for 37 kills while Caryn Inman added 19 and Laura Lesko 16. Ashley Frost provided 70 assists, a season high.

Madonna jumped out early in game one, forcing a pair of quick Cornerstone timeouts on their way to a 30-16 victory.

The second game was a different story as the Golden Eagles roared back, benefiting from numerous blocks up front and Madonna's inability to serve-receive on their way to a 30-24 win, evening the match at one game apiece.

In game three, the Crusaders again raced out to an early lead on the left arm of Tinina and the timely hitting in the front-line by Lesko, Inman and Heather Spooner as they cruised to a 30-17 lead.

Up by 10 in game four, Madonna seemed ready to cruise to the WHAC title, but Cornerstone refused to quit, going on a 8-2 run to close the lead to 24-22 Madonna. From there on, Frost took over, connecting on perfect sets to Lesko, then Tinina which paved the way for a 30-25 game three win.

The victory keeps Madonna as one of three unbeaten teams in the nation, and gives them the WHAC #1 seed in the upcoming NAIA Region VIII tournament next Friday and Saturday. By virtue of their victory, Madonna will serve as host for the regional tournament matches. The Crusaders will receive a first round by and play the winner of Friday's quarter-final match up. Madonna's semi-final match will begin at 10:00 am Saturday.

Following the match, WHAC president Bryan Rizzo presented the 2005 All-Conference awards and championship trophies.

Madonna swept through the competition there as well. WHAC Player-of-the-Year honors went to Tinina, who led the league in kills and kills-per-game. Frost was honored as WHAC Setter-of-the-Year after pacing the conference in total assists and assists per game. Freshman outside hitter Kelsey Mack, who finished fifth in the league in total kills despite missing nearly three weeks of action due to injury was named WHAC Freshman-of-the-Year.

Joining Tinina and Frost on the All-Conference first team were seniors Lesko and Stefanie DeNardin as well as junior middle hitter Caryn Inman.

Mack and sophomore Jacqui Gatt were named to the All-WHAC second team while freshman Lubovj Tihomirova joins Mack on the All-Freshman squad.

Spooner was named to the *Champions of Character* team, honoring one player from each school who best exhibits the five core values of the NAIA initiative; Respect, Responsibility, Integrity, Servant Leadership and Sportsmanship.

19-year head coach Jerry Abraham was honored as the WHAC Coach-of-the-Year for the fourth time in his career after guiding his team to the regular season and tournament championship and the school's first ever undefeated season.

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