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Lowell Fall Sports

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RIVA Lowell and East Grand Rapids

has become a West Michigan
tradition unlike any other

In major league baseball you have New York and Boston. In college basketball you have Duke and North Carolina. In West Michigan high school football there is Lowell and East Grand Rapids.

The common rivalry denominator at any level is greatness over the course of a decade or so that makes every encounter significant.

Such rivalries, steeped sometimes in a disdain for each other; proximity; and often times in memorable moments and respect are what enrich the legend of a rivalry.

Lowell and East Grand Rapids, West Michigan's two most successful high school football programs over the last decade or so, have framed their success in state championships. The Pioneers have won five straight and seven since the year 2000. Lowell has raised three championship trophies since 2002.


In 12 meetings since 2000, East holds a slight 7-5 margin.



Noel Dean Lowell
football coach

"A memorable moment for me is that Friday/Saturday split game when Tyler Meppelink intercepted a pass at the end of the game to secure a victory. Also, the win (35-12) win over a George Barcheski coached team. I think that moment put our program over the top," Lowell football coach Noel Dean explained.

LRY



East Grand Rapids football coach Peter Stuursma is an active speaker and listener during spring practices.

For Pioneer coach Peter Stuursma his most memorable moment in the rivalry, since arriving on the scene, is East Grand Rapids' improbable 44-40 fourth-quarter, come-from-behind win last year.

Ironically, the two coaches share the same moments for different reasons.

"The loss that I remember most, still, is that thunder and lightning rain delay game. That was a game where we thought we had turned the tide on them before the rain came on Friday," Stuursma said. "The other loss I remember is in 2004 when Lowell (led by Keith Nichol) beat us pretty good (55-14)."

For Dean last year's loss wasn't good. "I've thought about that one a lot. The untimely penalties are what hurt us and what bugs ya."

Both coaches recall their playing day rivals and how while maybe not while they played, but later how they became friends with players on the dreaded other side.

"New Lothrop was the game for Montrose when I played," Dean said. "We couldn't stand one another. I remember as a senior, while I still disliked New Lothrop, there were members on their team with whom I was friends," Dean explained. "It's all about winning. Losing doesn't feel good. I think you tend not to care for the teams that don't show you any dignity and respect."

Stuursma recalls the Catholic Central rivalry during his Pioneer playing days. "It was a slugfest. We both hit and went after one another hard. Both teams respected one another." I'm not sure we hated each other. I played hockey

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with some of the Catholic Central players in the off season.

The EGR coach said he can tell when it's rivalry week with Lowell. "Our practices on Monday are different for Lowell than any other team on our schedule. It's just a different atmosphere in preparation for the game," Stuursma said.

Dean compares it to 1980 movie "All the Right Moves" and the



Gabe Dean and his Red Arrow teammates have advanced to the Division 2 State championship game in each of the last two years, winning it in 2009 and losing in 2010.



Success at EGR has not been fleeting under Stuursma's reign, the coach and his Pioneers have won five straight Division 3 state football titles. They try for number six in 2011.

rivalry between Ampipe and Walnut Heights.

Lowell and East Grand Rapids is special and I'm lucky to be a part of it. You have two teams with incredible records over the last decade," he says.

Most of the league losses for the two schools have come against one another. Since Dean and Stuursma have been coaching, the O-K White conference champion has been either the Pioneers or the Red Arrows for the past 12 years and in 13 of the last 14 years. Caledonia tied honors with the two schools in 1998. The only year one of the two schools did not lay claim to a league title was in 1998 when Hudsonville won the conference. Since

1997, East has won it eight times and Lowell six.

"I think geography has helped with the rivalry and winning once in a while helps too," Dean said.

Since 2000, Lowell has lost just eight league games while EGR has fallen 10 times. However, six of those 10 Pioneer losses came in 2000.

"What that says is we're doing well against everybody else and both schools have been doing it for a while," Dean explains.

Stuursma believes the good rivalries have long-standing traditions of success. For the EGR coach this one has even had a wow factor.

"Last year we left the locker room at Lowell to head down to the field with the team and I looked up and saw the stadium filled with fans and I said to one of my coaches 'are you kidding me'," Stuursma said. "Whether it is a huge crowd at Lowell or at East watching this rivalry I believe conditions — the huge crowds and atmosphere help us in the playoffs," Stuursma explained.

This rivalry is good for high school football and is oh so special for a couple small West Michigan communities. ■

It's a 'No-header'

Kyllonen's soccer skills fit in at next level

As he entered into his senior season Matt Kyllonen was sure of one thing... he'd rather be playing soccer than watching it.

The Lowell senior is not alone. Soccer remains one of this country's most popular youth sports, numbers rose from about 15 million in 1987 to more than 17.5 million in 2002, the latest date for which numbers are available, according to U.S. Soccer. However, all indicators point to increasing participation numbers over the last five years.

Kyllonen has been playing soccer since the age of four, beginning with the YMCA, through school and with clubs (Lasso, Alliance Academy).

The senior enters his final year of soccer at Lowell high School with an eye on the future, more specifically extending his playing days to include the next level.

"I'm looking to play at the next level, hopefully get a scholarship at a smaller school," Kyllonen said.

Many believe, including his club (Alliance Academy) coach Abrahm Shearer, that Kyllonen has the athletic ability to play at the Division 1, 2 or the NAIA level.

"Matt has always had superior athletic ability. He's faster and quicker than most kids and now he understands the game's tactics," Shearer explained. "Any player that reaches the skill level to play club soccer is an elite high school player and can fit in at the next level."

The senior has had conversations with former Lowell soccer player and now a member of the Lewis University team about playing at the next level.

"I saw Jake (Karazewicz) at a Calvin College camp and he stressed staying in shape, conditioning and staying focused as key playing factors," Kyllonen said.



Matt Kyllonen's soccer skills have him among West Michigan's elite high school players.

Seeing the whole field, movement away from the ball, getting rid of the ball quickly, and knowing when to pass or shoot are non tangible skills Kyllonen has honed throughout his high school and club playing days.

"Matt has a great work ethic, a nose for the ball and is willing to focus on what coaches ask of him," said Lowell varsity boys soccer coach Rich O'Keefe.

The willingness to take shots was the Red Arrow's biggest challenge as a sophomore, according to his former coach Paul Legge.

"I had to convince Matt he was great at scoring goals. He had a gift for finding the back of the net. Getting him to believe and be a bit more selfish in taking shots was the biggest challenge," Legge said.

Last year Kyllonen netted 20 goals, still 10 short of the school record. .

"The record is 30, set by Sam Oberlin. It is one I'd like to own," he explains.

He'd also like to end his career at Lowell with his team winning a conference championship.

Great balance and competitive spirit have allowed Kyllonen to fight through a number of challenges on the field.

Having to deal with a four-game suspension his junior year provided some humility and a wake-up call for the Lowell soccer player.

"My suspension did not give my team the best chance to win those games. I let my teammates down," he says. "I don't want to do that again."

He adds he also let his parents down who put in a lot of time so that he could play at a young age.

"One thing I know for sure from that experience is that I'd much rather be playing than watching," Kyllonen explains.

His advice for those entering their high school years, play hard, stick with it, and practice like you play. ■

Lowell senior soccer player Matt Kyllonen expects to play soccer at the next level following his 2011 senior season

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inspired to an inspiring Red Arrow, Dean earns place in picture with outstanding past Lowell quarterbacks

Ask Lowell senior quarterback Gabe Dean which quarterbacks he watched growing up as a youth? He'll mention watching Marc Catlin in the 2002 finals; watching Keith Nichol as a junior in 2004 finals and later watching Nichol's brother Kyle.

The one name that may have inspired him most is not on that short list. No, that is reserved for that powerful, strong armed, golden retriever gridiron star "Air Bud."

"As a kid I watched him over and over again. He had a killer arm and would catch everything," Dean muses.

The Lowell senior quarterback won't be asked to pull in many passes this fall, but his strong legs and arm are expected to power Lowell to another strong run in the playoffs.

"I'm grateful for the opportunity provided me at Lowell. My play has been lifted by the players and coaches that have surrounded me," Dean says.

Dean is number seven in a strong lineup of quarterbacks to play at Lowell High School since Coach Noel Dean's arrival. He's been preceded by Jeff Catlin, T.J. Thayer, Josh Brown, Marc Catlin, Ryan Dykehouse, Keith Nichol, and Kyle Nichol.



Gabe Dean amassed nearly 8,000 yards in two seasons as quarterback of the Lowell Red Arrows heading into his senior year.

“They were all great football players and I’m honored to be a part of that list,” Dean explains. He gives his Uncle (Coach Noel Dean) much deserved credit for their success. “I believe he is one of the best high school quarterback coaches in the state.”

While Dean has grown into a an elite high school quarterback his start was on the offensive line as a guard. “As a third-grader the coach had me playing guard. I wanted to play quarterback, but went to where the coaches told me,” Dean said. As a fourth-grader at Haslett he earned the much desired opportunity to play quarterback. even at a young age, with Dean taking snaps, victories followed. “We went undefeated (8-0) and unscored upon,” he recalls.

His goals as he now plays out his senior year are very much team oriented. “I want to win a league title, something we haven’t done in my four years

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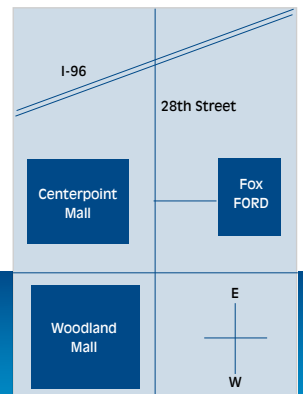


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and I want to be a good leader for my teammates.”

In the two years as varsity quarterback, Dean has passed and run for nearly 8,000 yards.

The Red Arrow is disappointed in the way high school quarterbacks are measured. “It’s all about speed, verticals, and your 40’s time.

You’re measured by what you look like and not what you’ve done. Because of this I’ve decided to wrestle at the next

level as opposed to trying to play football. With wrestling I can control my own destiny,” Dean explained. “I like both sports and have a passion for both football and wrestling.”

Four or five inches taller and Dean’s choice could have been college football.

Dean has experienced plenty of winning during his tenure at Lowell. He has won two individual state wrestling titles, and has been a member of team state championships in wrestling and football. He hopes to add to that list in 2011-12.

With all that success he says the tough losses he remembers more. “Losing when you’re not

suppose to or after losing a lead hurts. During the regular season you have another game thus they don’t catch up to you until later when there is time to reflect,” Dean explained.

His time playing football at Lowell and the opportunity to play for his Uncle/Coach has all been good according to the senior.

“There’s been tough times, but I’ve enjoyed the opportunity given to me to be

successful and to be with the guys (my teammates),” Dean said. “Coach Dean is tough. With him, your either a part of it or you’re not a part of it.”

Dean may be the only athlete in the state who plays for his uncle in one season and then plays for his father in another season.

The Red Arrow’s wrestling coach is his father Dave Dean. “They have different styles but are similar in many ways,” he says. “The sports are different too. Wrestling is more one on one.”

It is also the sport Dean views as giving him the best opportunity to enjoy success following high school playing days. ■

“Coach Dean is tough. With him, your either a part of it or you’re not a part of it.” — Gabe Dean

Pink Arrow's Education Component

Making a Difference



Cancer Free - Lowell freshman now shares her journey's story with elementary children

Playing with barbies, collecting seashells from the beach and what color balloons she wants for her birthday are topics of seven year old girls.

"Am I going to die?" isn't suppose to be in the mix of those topics.

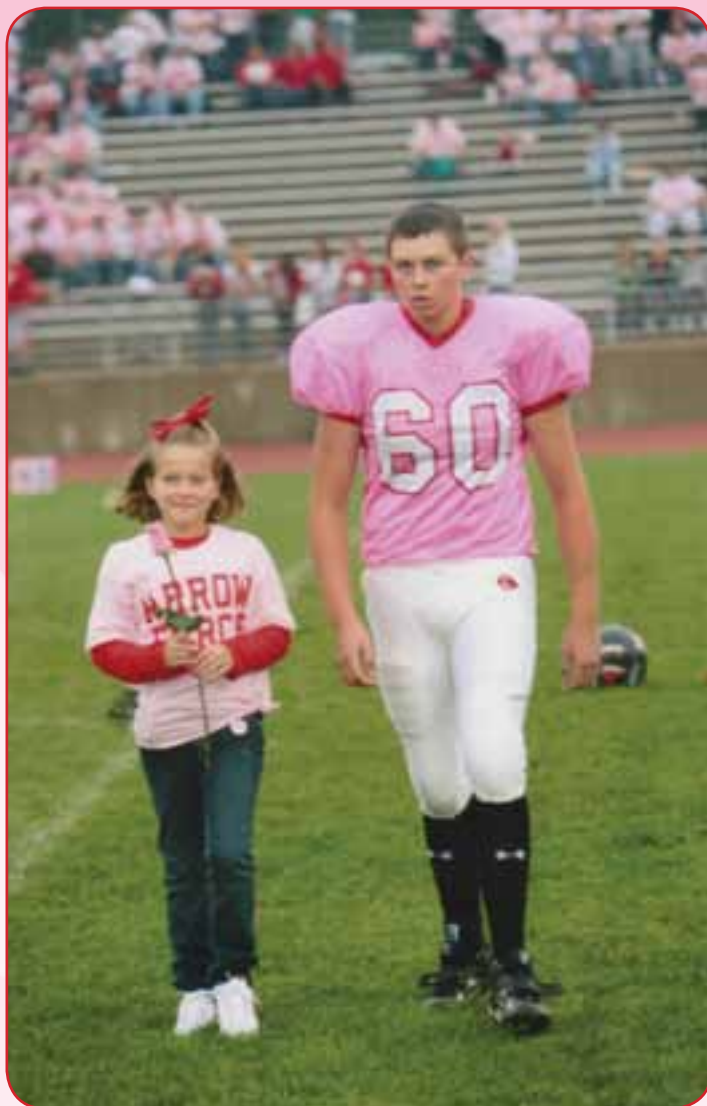
Yet, for Lowell's Anna Organek and untold numbers of children on the cancer journey, they are forced to question their own mortality.

Organek did at the age of seven. As a cancer patient at DeVos Children's Hospital, Organek was diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma. It's a cancer that starts in cells called lymphocytes which are part of the the body's immune system. In November of 2007, doctors found a spot above Organek's heart. "I recall that day," said Anna's mother, Heather Organek. "It's a day you don't want to relive"

The two years that followed were filled with weekly trips to the hospital for all-day sessions of chemo.

"It made me feel as if I had the flu all the time," Organek would explain to Cherry Creek Elementary children.

Doctors told the Organek family that it was a 99.9 percent chance curable. It was, but what followed was a relapse (two spots behind the heart). The prognosis this time was just 50-50.



Heather Organek a freshman at Lowell High School in 2011-12 is shown here wearing her Pink Arrow Jersey during the 2009 half-time ceremony. Organek is a survivor of Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma.

Through the in classroom session and the discussion/support groups Gilda's Club holds outside of class, it works with kids to:

- Identify and name feelings
- Identify and name people in their lives who are safe to talk to
- Recognize losses in regard to divorce, bullying, cancer diagnosis, death and others
- Identify ways to care for themselves

"That was probably the worst day. The news was difficult to hear," said Anna's mother Heather Organek.

With extended chemotherapy treatments, the flu symptoms stayed, and her hair went away.

While losing her hair bothered the young Organek, knowing that children she befriended at the hospital, who were also being treated for cancer, were now dying.

It made the young Organek ask if she was going to die? Doctors told her and the Organek family they would do everything they could so that didn't happen.

"That was hard," Anna Orgaenk recalls. "I still keep in touch with some of the parents and a seven-year old Traverse City boy named Andrew who survived his journey."

Organek, who has been cancer free for six years, will attend her last annual visit, take in her last scan before the end of year. No more visits. News worthy of a family celebration.

Not only grateful for Anna's health, Heather and Brian Organek were overwhelmed by the support shown by the Lowell community during the treatment.

"It was fabulous. I don't know what we would have done without it," Heather Organek said.

Organek, now 14, and a freshman high school golfer, through a collaborative effort between Lowell Schools and Gilda's Club will speak to elementary children for a second straight year about her journey.

"It gives me chills to listen to her speak to those kids. She has such a way so they understand. She relates to them and is able to speak at their level," Organek said.

Anna Organek speaking to elementary children is an example that not all that happens through the collaborative effort of Gilda's Club Lowell Program and Lowell school Districts takes place at the 314 Hudson St. farmhouse shared with Lowell Senior Neighbors. In addition to free cancer and grief support of community children, adults, families and friends, Gilda's Club partners with Lowell schools

to provide support and education on taking care of emotional health when grief or loss occurs. This includes all elementary schools as well as the middle and high school students.

As an on-going component of the Pink Arrow Project, the school's collaboration is focused on helping children deal with their emotions in a healthy way when big things in life happen such as cancer or death and loss (whether it is cancer related or not).

"Because students after-school schedules are so busy we find they work better if we are with students during the school day," said Gilda's Club program director, Beth Nelson. "This allows students to find common ground and to talk to one another. It's a great feeling when students understand they are not the only ones in the boat."

Life can be full of challenging dynamics ...cancer and grief are two biggies. Seldom are children or adults taught how to work through the emotional impact when such things occur. Many times individuals will choose unhealthy ways to respond such as alcohol or drug use, eating disorders, striving for perfection and many others.

Gilda's Club Grand Rapids communicates at some level the importance of good emotional healthcare at school assemblies and the in-classroom school programs,

The after school grief support program for teens impacted by any type of loss has developed into a special time and space where children learn they are not alone on their journey.

Gilda's Club grief support group visits Lowell High School twice a month. Through grants, educators are encouraged to use funds creatively to promote healthy initiatives for students at all levels. ■



Patience



Pays

Strong high school finish has college coach believing better tennis ahead for Lowell's Trapp

Grand Valley State University women's tennis coach John Black first saw a youthful Kelly Trapp swing a tennis racket as a fourth grader at the Ramblewood Tennis and Health Club.

He made a mental note that the young girl might be someone to keep his eye on down the road.

Some eight-nine years later Black learned that the young girl, now a young lady playing high school tennis at Lowell was competing in the MHSAA Division 1 Individual State Tennis Tournament.

cont. on page 22 see "TRAPP"

"She (Trapp) has marvelous balance and movement, a good deep serve and won't give away points." — Bonnie Wall

Jenison, the site of the state tournament, just five minutes from the GVSU campus, compelled Black to go watch the Lowell senior.

"Kelly's the type of player I look for - she's good but still has the best years of tennis ahead of her," Black explained. "She's athletic, quick, good form, knows the basics and works hard and has potential."

Potential in Black's eyes is a player who is good but will be better two-three years down the road. "Sometimes the best players coming out of high school have already peaked. I want someone who will be better a few years down the road," Black said.

The Viking coach witnessed Trapp play her best high school tennis the day of the state tournament, as the Red Arrow surprised more than a few as the unseeded player forged her way into the finals before losing to Portage Northern's number one seed Talia Johnson in straight sets 6-2, 6-2.

"Kelly is an outstanding player who realizes what she has to do to play and compete at the

next level," said Trapp's high school coach, Bonnie Wall. "She has marvelous balance and movement, a good deep serve and won't give away points."

Wall added "Trapp will need to improve on taking advantage of her opponent when their in trouble, and being more aggressive with her own play."

College tennis means more tournaments and more matches. Black said as a coach it is up to him to find out what works for each player so that he pushes them but doesn't burn them out.

Trapp's will and patience has been tested before with the result being wins over the second, third and sixth seeds in earning a spot in the Division 1 finals.

"I'm mostly a defensive player. I make my opponents earn their points. I don't go for broke on every shot. I wait for my chance," Trapp explains. "My play in the state tournament was by far the best tennis I've played. My match in the quarter final is by far the best match I've ever played."

Black would add "to this point." The Viking



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coach is betting that Trapp's best tennis is still two-three years down the road.

Her will was tested. Her patience was tested. If ever Kelly Trapp was going to forego her approach and game plan, it would have been in the Division 1 tennis quarter final.

Trapp trailed one set to nothing to Bloomfield Hills Lahser's Mollie Fox. From a psyche standpoint point it was more than just a set, the number three seed marched flawlessly to a 6-1 win. With no signs of a chink in her opponent's armor the unseeded Trapp appeared set up for a decisive and quick dismissal.

"I just wanted to win two games instead of one in that second set. Make it a little closer. She was on fire in that first set and could do no wrong," Trapp said.

The Lowell senior continued with what has earned her the title of the best girls tennis player to come out of Lowell. Trapp kept getting one more ball back over the net for Fox to return.

cont. on page 24 see "TRAPP"



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"Kelly was not only returning the balls, but began to return them deep into Fox's court. With the deep returns she was then able to come to the net," said Lowell girls tennis coach Bonnie Wall.

Trapp's began to wear Fox down in winning set two (6-3) with her relentless approach.

"I'm mostly a defensive player. I make my opponents earn their points. I don't go for broke on every shot. I wait for my chance," Trapp explains.

After battling back to win the second set, Trapp seized her quarter final moment as she followed it up with a 6-2 win in the decisive third set.

"Kelly is the best player I've seen at getting to shots that many would not and then being able to do something with it," Wall said. "She moves and anticipates extremely well.."

The Lowell coach pointed to a couple fantastic gets against Fox. "I think that can frustrate opponents and take the wind out of their sails," Wall explained.

Trapp advanced to the quarter final with wins against Gilbralter-Carlson's Robin Bruhley (6-0, 6-1); and Bloomfield Hills Marian's sixth seeded

Bailey Paradise (6-2, 6-4).

Trapp's win against Fox earned her a semi final match-up against second seeded Nancy Benda from Birmingham Seaholm.

Benda appeared unable to combat the steady, disciplined approach of Trapp. "Mentally, Benda appeared to have a meltdown out there. She was taking time to wipe off and playing other tennis games," Wall said.

Her approach did not throw Trapp off her game and she summarily dismissed Benda 6-0, 6-1 to reach the final against Portage Northern's number one seed Talia Johnson.

The Lowell senior unable to break Johnson lost in straight sets 6-2, 6-2.

"It was hot and Johnson is a very good player," Trapp said.

Trapp's reward for being the first Lowell tennis player to advance to the finals of the MHSAA state tournament was a scholarship offer to play tennis at Grand Valley State University. It will work nicely with her academic scholarship in pursuit of a premed degree. ■

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Set



Jordan Timmer is signed and ready to play her college volleyball at Central Michigan University in the Fall.

Up Nicely

CMU bound Timmer fueled by challenge at next level.

A young Jordan Timmer spent three years trying to find her game.

Was it volleyball? A game she began playing for the first time as a fifth-grader. Or would it be soccer? A game introduced to her in the second grade.

"I remember not really liking volleyball in fifth grade. It wasn't a real fast paced game. There was a lot of serving. The ball would hit the ground and then someone would serve again," Timmer explained.

As an 11-year old, the Lowell senior was the tallest player on her team, making her an ideal fit as an outside hitter. The position did not set well with Timmer and left her seriously kicking around the idea playing soccer.

Life, though, has a way of speeding up. The game of volleyball, while confusing at first, did the same.

Teammates once shorter than Timmer now had grown taller than her by the eight-grade. Their growth provided a natural transition from outside hitter to setter.

"The game was now fun and faster," she recalls.

As an eight-grader, Timmer was indoctrinated to club volleyball through the Michigan Volleyball Association. At the club level, Timmer found the game of volleyball to be fun and even faster.

As a freshman and sophomore the Red Arrow played on a club national team. If Timmer didn't know before then she knew now.

"It was at that point I knew volleyball was a sport I could compete at and enjoy," Timmer said.

Cont. page 28 see "SET UP"

You can't win if you're setter's emotions are up and down," — Jordan Timmer

Boy, and How She's Competed!

Heading into her senior year Timmer has amassed some notable numbers while at Lowell. She begins her final year with 1,242 assists, 236 aces, 582 blocks, 992 digs and 916 kills. All of that and 92% serving percentage.

With those numbers in place, Timmer has been nominated to the AVCA's Under Armour 2011 High School All American watch list. She has also been nominated for prep Volleyball's Andi Collins Award which recognizes the top setter in the nation.

As a freshman her club team won Nationals and she was voted tournament MVP. In her sophomore year Timmer was listed on Prep Volleyball's Soph 79 honorable mention list. Last year she was one of Prep Volleyball's Top 50 junior recruits.

Colleges Called Timmer's Number

Through summer camps and club play the Timmer name began popping up in the volleyball circuit.

"I think I first started hearing from colleges my freshman year," Timmer said. "It was cool but I really didn't know what to think about it.

Between her sophomore and junior years, the phone calls began to pick up. Many of those stemmed from playing on a club volleyball team that won the nationals. Timmer recalls times when there were up to 25 coaches in the gym watching the games. "Many of tournaments were played at college sites," she adds.

This proved helpful in making the important choice of which college she'd attend after high school.

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MI Sports Page

SET UP cont. from page 29

"I visited Notre Dame, Valparaiso, Winthrop and Central Michigan University. There were others I was going to visit, but it was clear to me at that point that CMU was the right fit," she explained. "I loved the environment, the style of play, the girls on the team and I clicked well with the coach."

Playing for a Coach Who's Your Mom

Playing for a parent has its ups and downs. Timmer has played four years of volleyball at Lowell High School under the tutelage and guidance of coach Gigi Peal.....also known as Mom.

"It had its ups and downs," Timmer says. "It's been good. It's been stressful, and it's been fun."

As a freshman and sophomore, Timmer admits she had a difficult time separating Mom from coach.

"If I was mad at Mom it was difficult for me get over it and not take it on the floor with me when there was a game," she explains.

Learning to deal with and control her emotions has also made Timmer a better setter. "You can't win if you're setter's emotions are up and down," she says.

Cont. page 30 see "SET UP"

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As a coach you don't have access to your players 24 hours a day. I had to make sure that I provided Jordan that same amount of time away from volleyball that her teammates were getting." — Gigi Peal

While her whole family is involved in volleyball, Timmer says the game is not a constant topic of conversation. "When we're home it is not volleyball all the time," Timmer notes.

Peal adds, "Some days are rougher than others. Today, It was a really rough day at practice." The Red Arrow coach notes that Jordan's first year was probably the hardest. "More so because of the adjustments I needed to make. As a coach you don't have access to your players 24 hours a day. I had to make sure that I provided Jordan that same amount of time away from volleyball that her teammates were getting."

Senior Year...Already!

"High school has gone by fast...really fast," Timmer says.

Conference champions, all district and all state honors are three pretty challenging goals for one's senior year. And yet, there are more. "I also want there to be no regrets and to have fun," she explains.

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