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SETTING UP A WIN

WRITTEN BY KAITLIN SCHULER. DESIGNED BY ZACHARY ANGLES.

Making up for the football team's loss, the women's volleyball team finished their season with a 3-1 set win over Ohio State. They also defeated rival Michigan State with a score of 3-0 prior to this victory. LSA junior Lexi Erwin explained, "Last year we made it to the elite eight game in the NCAA tournament, but this year we would like to go farther." The team began their NCAA tournament in Louisville against Tennessee. Erwin said that she saw the success of the team throughout the season as a result of their connection this year. "Especially after we had a slump of like four losses in a row, our team made a commitment to being connected after every point whether we win or lose it. We understand that we are all working toward the same goal, a NCAA championship, and it reassured each player that if we are struggling, 13 other girls have our back. I don't think I have been a part of a team that has every single player, even those who don't get to play as much, connected and supporting one another."

Erwin contributed to this connectedness with her leadership as an upperclassman this season. She was named Academic All-Big Ten and MVP of the Michigan/Adidas Invitational in 2011 and Big Ten Co-Player of the Week and Tiger Invitational MVP in 2012. "I had an entirely different view of leadership when I came to college versus now being an upperclassman," Erwin explained. "I thought leaders have to have it all together and have the strength to do everything on their own, but the best leaders admit to their weaknesses and ask for help from those who follow them." This leadership gave the women a final season score of 27-12 before the NCAA tournament in November and December. The women had big wins against Iowa, Nebraska, Northwestern and Illinois, and kept that momentum going throughout the NCAA games. When asked what she thinks keeps the team motivated, Erwin responded, "Michigan has great tradition, and I love the quote from Bo Schembechler: 'The Team, The Team, The Team.' I think for all teams at Michigan that quote is a main priority, in that no one is more important than another. It creates a bond that brings people together to play for a school and a tradition that is way bigger than one player can imagine." The women represented this team mindset well in 2012 and hoped to keep that going into 2013.

1 Michigan attempted to return the ball off a tip from LSA senior Claire McElheny. She was co-captain for the 2012 season and received the Big Ten Sportsmanship award. Photo by Connie Ly.

2 LSA junior Lexi Erwin set up for a hard spike during a game. She was named to both the Academic All-Big Ten team and the All-Big Ten team this season. Photo by Connie Ly.

3 The women regrouped during a time-out and listened to the advice from their assistant coach Erin Virtue. With only one senior on the team, the women had a lot of room for growth and took advantage of that, improving greatly upon their previous season. Photo by Connie Ly.

4 In order to boost their energy before games, according to Erwin, the women always danced together before warm-ups. Photo by Connie Ly.

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