



WONWOC

A STATE DREAM COME TRUE
A LOOK AT WONWOC-CENTER'S STATE VOLLEYBALL DEBUT

Wonewoc-Center

WOLVES'

Photos by Nate Beier/GX3 Media

STATE

DEBUT

SULLIED

Wonewoc-Center volleyball's magical run ends with loss to McDonell Central Catholic in state semifinals

GREEN BAY — The Wonewoc-Center volleyball team's unforgettable run to the state tournament brought them to heights never before summited in program history.

That run would fall two wins shy of the ultimate prize, but the opportunity to simply show up to Green Bay and play at the Resch Center on the state's grandest stage was a substantial reward in and of itself — and an experience no one involved with the team will ever forget.

No. 2 seed McDonell Central Catholic used repeated strong starts to sets to eventually sweep the third-seeded Wolves 25-21, 25-19, 25-11 in a WIAA Division 4 state semifinal matchup Friday, November 5 at the Resch Center in Green Bay.

Wonewoc-Center found itself behind in each set Friday morning, but made charges in the first two to prevent the Macks from cruising comfortably to wins in each.

By **ZACH RASTALL**
HSE Sports Correspondent

In the first set, McDonell Central Catholic led 21-15 before the Wolves cobbled together a 6-1 run to get within a point at 22-21. However, the Macks rattled off the next three points to close out the set.

McDonell would then race out to a 14-3 advantage in the second set to once again crank the pressure way up on Wonewoc-Center. The Wolves slowly whittled away at the deficit and staved off three set points before the Macks closed things out.

The Macks would again build up a 14-3 lead in the third set, but this time Wonewoc-Center wasn't able to make any sort of sustained run and saw their opponents easily wrap up the third for a straight-set sweep, finished off by a Destiny Baughman kill.

"I really liked how we came out in the first couple of sets and played. I thought we played very competitively in the first two sets, but not so much the third," said Wonewoc-Center head coach Nikki Justman. "Their blocking and their swings just got the better of us in that third set. They played a good game. We needed to be a little bit more aggressive and make less errors, and we did not."

For the Wolves in the semifinal, Kelsey Justman fired in a team-high 12 kills to go along with 3 digs and an ace, Nicole Totzke added 5 kills and 4 digs, Shelby Justman contributed 4 kills and an ace, Jaelyn Stowe notched 21 assists, Estanna Graewin had 6 digs and Kadence Hamburg finished with 2 aces.

As for the Macks, Baughman, Marley Hughes, Grace Goettl and Aubrey Dorn all had 6 kills. Abby Bresina recorded 7 aces, 16 assists and 6 digs while Lauryn Deetz also had 6 digs.

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STATE STAT HIGHLIGHTS

MCDONELL'S CRISP ATTACK

The Macks kept Wonewoc-Center on its toes all match with an aggressive attack while also limiting errors. They had 34 kills and 7 errors on 68 attempts compared to 23 kills and 19 errors on 72 attempts for the Wolves.

A SERVING DISCREPANCY

McDonell Central Catholic got the better of Wonewoc-Center when it came to serving in their state semifinal matchup. The Macks fired in 16 total aces — 7 of those coming courtesy of Abby Bresina — compared to 6 service errors. The Wolves finished with 4 aces and 5 errors on the serve.

SCENIC BLUFFS PLAYER OF THE YEAR SHOWS OUT

Scenic Bluffs Player of the Year Kelsey Justman was a major bright spot for Wonewoc-Center at state. The sophomore fired in a match-high 12 kills and only made two attacking errors in 22 attempts for a .455 hitting percentage.

DIVISION 4 STATE CONT.

The Chippewa Falls McDonell Macks won the 2021 state volleyball title after defeating Wabeno/Laona 3-0 on Saturday, November 6 at the Resch Center in Green Bay.

The Macks, which finished as the D4 state runner-up in 2020, knocked off Wonewoc-Center in the D4 state semifinal.

In the other semifinal, the top-seeded Monticello Ponies were upset by the fourth-seeded Wabeno/Laona Rebels 3-1. Monticello is coached by Becky (Schmidt) Gustafson, a member of the 1993 class of Wonewoc-Center.

Other area state qualifiers, Holmen in Division 1 and Reedsburg in Division 2, were both dispatched in straight sets.



Monticello head coach Becky (Schmidt) Gustafson, Wonewoc-Center class of 1993. HSE photo by Nate Beier/GX3 Media



ABOVE Wonewoc-Center's Shelby Justman takes the court to warm-up for the state semifinal against McDonell. **BELOW** Jaelyn Stowe sets up an attack in one of the final bouts at state.



ABOVE Wonewoc-Center's Kelsey Justman winds up for a serve against McDonell. **BELOW** Wonewoc-Center's Bryn Ertel reaches up to return a bump from McDonell.



Wonewoc-Center's Stacie Kopenhafer and Nicole Totzke cross arms to scoop under a return from McDonell during the state semifinal matchup.



Wonewoc-Center's Kyleigh Nueschwander-McDermott, Jaelyn Stowe, Kelsey Justman, and team wave goodbye after the final set versus McDonell.

WONEWOC-CENTER'S PLAYOFF PATH



WOLVES MAKE A STATEMENT IN 2021

The Wonewoc-Center volleyball team completed its greatest season in school history in 2021, culminating in the program's first-ever state berth.

The expectations were high for the Wolves volleyball team after a successful run during last spring's Alternative Fall season that ended in a regional final matchup with rival and eventual Alternative Fall state qualifier, Royall.

Those expectations faced a setback early on as W-C dropped its league opener to, of all teams, Royall. The 3-1 loss put the Wolves behind the count in terms of conference standings. Despite bouncing back, Wonewoc-Center fell behind conference counterpart, Bangor, by two games in Scenic Bluffs standings after dropping a 3-1 decision at home to the Cardinals.

Wonewoc-Center, however, didn't throw in the towel.

On the second trip through the SBC, the Wolves flipped the script on Royall to claim a 3-0 win. The biggest night of the year was the rematch between the two league leaders, Bangor and Wonewoc-Center.

The two teams met in the first match of a double dual in Hillsboro. Bangor had built a 2-1 advantage and seemed primed to finish off the Wolves in the fourth set. W-C had other

ideas. The girls in green fought off a Bangor victory, which surely would have set them up to claim the SBC title alone, and forced a fifth set. The offensive surge put forth by WC may have been the turning point in the conference season. Wonewoc-Center won 3-2 to cut its deficit to just a single game. Bangor, however, was felled by Hillsboro later that same night and the league title race came down to the final two matches of the year. Wonewoc-Center claimed its destined place atop the league for the first time since sharing a title in 2005 with Hillsboro as they closed out the regular season with wins over both Hillsboro and Brookwood.

2021 cont. on pg. 5



Wonewoc-Center's fan section showed up in a big way at the volleyball team's state debut at the Resch Center. HSE photo by Nate Beier/GX3 Media

2021 WONEWOC-CENTER WOLVES >> GIRLS VOLLEYBALL << DIV 4 SECTIONAL CHAMPION



21 shelby JUSTMAN // senior



22 nicole TOTZKE // senior



12 bryn FERTEL // sophomore



1 estanna GRAEWIN // sophomore

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In the postseason, W-C won the rubber match with Royall, then swept Hillsboro in a regional final. The Wolves ended Bangor's season with a sectional semifinal win and then exacted revenge against Highland in a sectional final. The two teams had met in the 1992 season with Highland topping WCHS to get to state. It was poetic justice that W-C's first ever state berth in volleyball would come against the team that had soured the school's last sectional final appearance in any sport.

At state, W-C brought a large contingent of fans, but couldn't give them a win. The Chippewa Falls McDonell Macks took down Wonewoc-Center 3-0 before topping Wabeno/Laona in the sectional final contest.

The Wolves became just the fourth school to represent the Scenic Bluffs Conference at the WIAA state tournament. Bangor was the first to do so in 1990. Hillsboro followed with five-straight trips from 2003-07 and then made return trips in 2011, 12 and 2019. Royall qualified for the 2020 alternative season state tournament.

Wonewoc-Center ends the season at 26-5 overall and 12-2 in league play. The Wolves tied Bangor for this year's SBC title after losing to both Royall and Bangor. The other three losses coincidentally came from two schools in the same conference. Fall Creek bested W-C twice at the Sparta tournament. The Crickets were number one ranked team in Division 3 for a large majority of the season. McDonell, which plays with Fall Creek in the Western Cloverbelt Conference, handed W-C its season-ending loss at state.

Despite the departure of several key components of the Wolves' roster, there's much to look forward to in the years to come for the W-C volleyball program. An emerging crop of young talent that includes SBC Player of the Year Kelsey Justman will be enough for WCHS to defend its league title as well as challenge for another deep playoff run in 2022.

HEAD COACH: NIKKI JUSTMAN // ASSISTANT COACH: MADDIE MAYBERRY



31 bridget TOTZKE // sophomore



34 lauren JOHNSON // senior



48 kyleigh NUSSWANDER-MODERNOTT // senior



53 brooklyn BOLTON // freshman



17 kelsey JUSTMAN // sophomore



6 taylor NOVY // junior



11 kadence HAMBURG // junior



20 jaelyn STOWE // sophomore



44 ana ROEHLING // senior



15 stacie KOPEHAFER // junior

2021 SEASON RESULTS

| OPPONENT | WE-THEY |
|----------------------|---------|
| @ Kickapoo | 3-0 W |
| @ Royall | 1-3 L |
| SBC quad @ Cashton | |
| New Lisbon | 3-0 W |
| Cashton | 3-0 W |
| Sparta tny | |
| North Crawford | 2-0 W |
| Eau Claire North | 2-0 W |
| Fall Creek | 0-2 L |
| Altoona | 2-0 W |
| Hillsboro | 2-0 W |
| Mauston | 2-1 W |
| Fall Creek | 0-2 L |
| @ Necedah | 3-0 W |
| Royall | 3-0 W |
| Brookwood | 3-0 W |
| Bangor | 1-3 L |
| Belmont tny | |
| Viroqua | 2-0 W |
| Belmont | 2-0 W |
| Argyle | 2-1 W |
| Cashton | 3-1 W |
| New Lisbon | 3-0 W |
| Hillsboro | 3-1 W |
| SBC quad @ Hillsboro | |
| Bangor | 3-2 W |
| Necedah | 3-0 W |
| @ Hillsboro | 3-1 W |
| @ Brookwood | 3-0 W |
| D4 Regional | |
| Weston | 3-0 W |
| Royall | 3-1 W |
| Hillsboro | 3-0 W |
| D4 Sectional | |
| Bangor @ Cashton | 3-1 W |
| Highland @ Highland | 3-1 W |
| D4 State | |
| McDonell | 0-3 L |

OVERALL: 26-5
 SBC: 12-2 (1st, tie Bangor)
 HOME RECORD: 7-1
 TNY RECORD: 8-2
 WIAA TNY RECORD: 5-1
 WIN STREAK: 15



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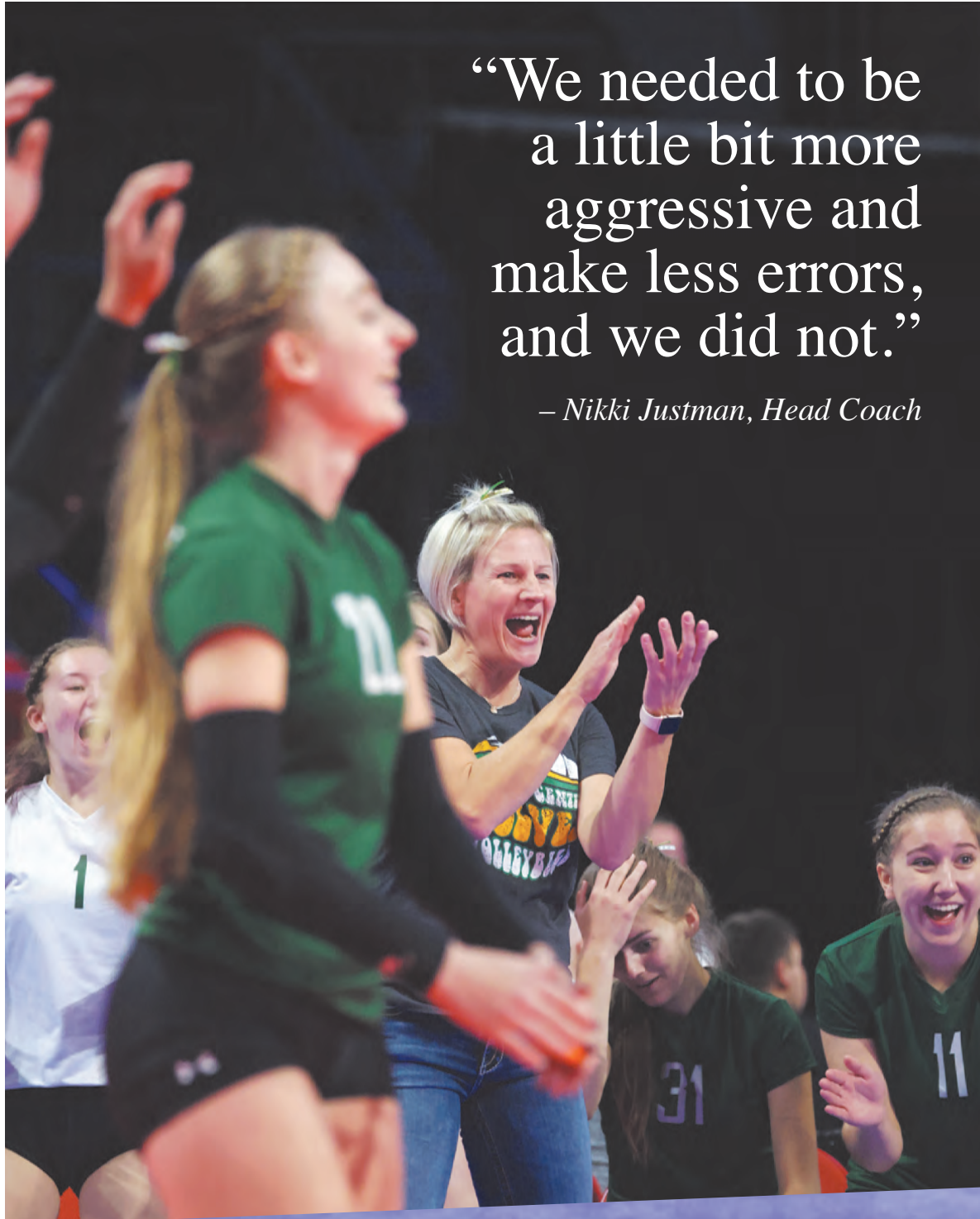
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“We needed to be a little bit more aggressive and make less errors, and we did not.”

– Nikki Justman, Head Coach



STATE

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In their sectional semifinal win over Bangor and sectional final victory against Highland, the Wolves had dropped the first set before rattling off the next three. McDonnell didn't allow for such an opportunity at state, keeping the pressure on with clean, attacking volleyball.

“We knew that they're an offensive team and that they have some big hitters,” said McDonnell Central Catholic head coach Kat Hanson. “But we also knew that, if we could pass and control the ball better, we're also very offensive. We did that really well today. We had some great ball control and that allowed us to take them out of system consistently.”

The Macks would go on to sweep No. 4 seed Wabeno/Laona 25-13, 25-15, 25-13 in Saturday's Division 4 state championship match to win their second state title in program history (having previously won in 2009).

In the other Division 4 state semifinal, Wabeno/Laona toppled No. 1 seed Monticello — who is coached by Wonewoc-Center alum Rebecca Gustafson — 25-23, 24-26, 25-23, 25-19.

Meanwhile, Friday's loss marked the end of the line for Wonewoc-Center's prolific senior class consisting of Shelby Justman, Nicole Totzke, Ana Roehling, Lauren Johnson and Kyleigh Neuschwander-McDermott.

For them, it was extra meaningful to become the first Wonewoc-Center seniors to finish their careers at the Resch Center.

“It was honestly a feeling of ‘okay wow, we're here,’” Shelby Justman said of stepping on the Resch Center court for the first time. “It just finally hit me that we were actually here because when we won against Highland it was awesome — everybody felt a big relief — but it didn't hit us that we're actually going to state.”

“The moment we walked in here to see this massive stadium, everything just washed out of your body and you were like ‘we made it,’” Totzke added.

The Wolves are hopeful this team has changed the program for the better permanently, setting the stage for a new era of sustained success at their small school. Whether or not that happens or what it exactly looks like remains to be seen, but this much is certain: this historic run for a program that, not that long ago had trouble winning sets (let alone matches), will never be forgotten.

“It's been an awesome experience to be here,” Nikki Justman said. “Just setting foot on that court is pretty magical for these girls.”

Wonewoc-Center's Jaelyn Stowe, Stacie Kopenhafer, Nicole Totzke, and Kelsey Justman watch as Shleby Justman drives an attack over the net in Friday's state semifinal matchup against McDonnell. McDonnell would go on to win the state championship.
HSE photo by Nate Beier.





Justman family's volleyball passion helps transform Wonewoc-Center program

By ZACH RASTALL
HSE Sports Correspondent

Shelby and Kelsey Justman were two of the most important players on the 2021 state semifinalist Wonewoc-Center volleyball team, their years of hard work in the sport paying dividends and on full display.

With a mom who had her own noted volleyball background who eventually followed that passion into coaching, it shouldn't come as much of a surprise that her daughters followed in her footsteps into the sport.

But it wasn't always a foregone conclusion that Shelby and Kelsey would become standout stars for the Wonewoc-Center volleyball program. Though each had dabbled in the sport, it wasn't until they each experienced a Wisconsin Badgers volleyball match firsthand that they started to develop intense passions for playing.

"I didn't necessarily fall in love with the game until I went to a Wisconsin Badgers match and watched those girls play," Shelby said. "After that, I joined club, I started working hard on everything that I wanted to do because my goal was to make varsity that year — my freshman year."

Her younger sister expressed similar sentiments. "It's actually pretty funny because I didn't want to play volleyball at first — I wanted to play football," Kelsey said. "My parents took me to a Badgers volleyball game and I was absolutely blown away by it. I was like 'I really want to do that' so I joined a club team."

Once they both locked into volleyball, their paths were headed straight for the Wonewoc-Center high school volleyball team, coached by their mom, Nikki Justman.

Nikki is also a Wonewoc-Center High School alum who was a successful volleyball player in her own right when the program won a couple conference titles and made a sectional final in the early 1990s.

Being able to coach the team that features her daughters — as well as her niece, Bryn Ertel — during a similar boom period for the program has naturally been extremely rewarding for her, even if the process of coaching her daughters has been its own learning experience.

Nikki noted that their differing personalities is part of that. She said Shelby has a similar personality to her own and isn't afraid to engage in a back-and-forth during practice. Kelsey, according to Nikki, is a bit more reserved and less inclined to do so. So it's been all about finding the best way to coach them individually while also dealing with the unique family aspect.

"I love being able to coach them. It's taken me many years to understand how to coach them," Nikki said. "Learning how to be a coach to your daughters is a very difficult thing. I think we've finally reached that point where they understand where I'm coming from but I also understand where they're coming from."

Having found some sort of sweet spot in that delicate balancing act is clearly benefiting the Wolves as a whole, as the Justman girls played a crucial role for the team as they piled up 16 straight wins throughout October, picking up a conference title, a regional title and the program's first-ever state appearance along the way.

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FAMILY

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Nikki knows all about what it's like to be part of a Wonewoc-Center team to win conference and regional titles and get on the cusp of a state tournament trip. To be part of this journey with her daughters and see this current crop of Wolves take it that one step further than her team did is an experience beyond her wildest dreams.

"Trying to separate the fact that I'm a proud coach and a proud mom is fun and interesting all at the same time. Being able to share this with them is just amazing," Nikki said. "They've heard me talk about things like 'we were conference champs, we were regional champs and we missed going to state barely.'" Now that they're there, they're realizing the same sort of things and it's absolutely wonderful to watch them realize their goals."

For their stellar play throughout this historic fall, both Shelby and Kelsey were named as first-team all-conference selections in the Scenic Bluffs. Shelby was also a first-team pick as a junior and an all-conference honorable mention as a sophomore. Kelsey was an honorable mention back in the spring as a freshman.

The cherry on top: Kelsey was named the 2021 Scenic Bluffs Player of the Year for this fall.

That sort of accolade won't come as much of a surprise to Shelby, who has seen firsthand just how hard her younger sister works at getting better. From the days spent attending Kelsey's middle school matches to cheer her on, all the way to seeing her named as the conference's top player is quite a reward on its own.

"Watching her grow on the court and off the court, even in practices, is amazing," Shelby said. "She's one of the hardest workers ever. She's outside every single day hitting the ball. We have this thing hanging from our basketball hoop and she's always out there every single day working on her vertical."

This multi-year ride has been special for the entire Justman family, though Wonewoc-Center's state semifinal loss to eventual Division 4 state champion McDonell Central Catholic marked an ending of sorts.

Nikki, Kelsey and cousin Bryn will all be back for another round in 2022, but Shelby will be graduating during this coming spring. The Justman sisters' time playing competitive volleyball together for the Wolves has come to an end, but the memories they made together in the process will last the rest of their lives.

Even if she didn't have much time to reflect on it all during this run, Kelsey played with an increased urgency knowing that this would be her last chance to play with Shelby and the team's other seniors. It all paid off in historic fashion for Wonewoc-Center.

"It's hard because I would like to take a step back and think about it, but I also can't because I don't want to think about it. I think that's part of the reason we're pushing so hard this year," Kelsey said earlier in the postseason. "This is Shelby's last year and this is Nicole's (Totzke) last year and this is all of our other seniors' last year. I wanted this all so bad for not only myself."

RIGHT Wonewoc-Center's Kelsey Justman and Shelby Justman go after a hit together in the Wolves' state debut matchup with McDonell. **BELOW** Wonewoc-Center fans rave and cheer on the Wolves. HSE photos by Nate Beier/GX3 Media.

