



NEWS

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For Immediate Release

October 13, 2011

Edwards Twins Key to El Camino College's Volleyball Success In 2011

The El Camino College women's volleyball team continues a proud tradition of winning during the past 20 years under head coach LeValley Pattison. The team has won 11 South Coast Conference titles and captured two state championships during that period, so when the time came for local athletes Kaitlyn and Lauren Edwards to choose where to continue their volleyball careers after graduating from West Torrance High School in 2010, the choice was easy.

"We always saw articles about El Camino College going to state and always doing well," said Kaitlyn, the younger of the twin sisters by two minutes.

"We wanted to stay close to home and we weren't quite ready to go to a four-year," Lauren added. "We thought El Camino College would be the best thing for us."

The Edwards sisters began playing volleyball during their freshman year of high school after eight years of playing soccer together.

"We just didn't want to play (soccer) anymore," Kaitlyn explained. "It got kind of repetitive. We did it for eight years and we wanted something different."

"It just wasn't fun anymore," Lauren added.

Volleyball was a natural choice for the sisters, whose size suits them well for the game.

"We've always been tall," the 5-foot-11 Kaitlyn said.

"We had a teacher in middle school who was a volleyball coach and always told us to come play because we were tall so that's how we got started," the 6-foot-1 Lauren added.

The twins took to the game quickly with Lauren, then 5'10, reaching varsity in her sophomore season. Kaitlyn joined her one year later and the sisters helped turn the team into a winner.

The West High School Warriors went 17-10 during the Edwards' senior year, the best season for a West women's volleyball team since 2006-07. The Warriors finished third in the Bay League behind powerhouse Mira Costa High School and Redondo Union High School. The Warriors won two matches in the CIF-SS Division 1AA playoffs before falling to Newport Harbor High, the eventual champions.

Along with their success at the high school level, the Edwards sisters also had great achievements playing for their South Bay Volleyball Club team, with Lauren attending the Junior Olympics in 2008. One year later, Kaitlyn joined her.

"It was really fun to see all the different teams," Lauren said. "Especially when we were younger and we got to see all the 18-year-olds and see how hard they could hit the ball and how they didn't let anything drop."

Despite their success, the twins say they were not heavily recruited coming out of high school and decided to reach out and communicate their interest to Pattison, emailing her at the end of their school year.

Contrary to the sisters' beliefs, someone had been keeping tabs on their progress at West Torrance, a team that had their best season in years during the Edwards' senior year.

“West had a really great season that year,” Pattison said. “I think they are two of the best players in terms of responsibility and being student athletes. They are good kids, they are smart and they are good teammates and I was glad to have them come in.”

The sisters were thrown right into the fire and were expected to be impact players right out of the gate. Pattison said they had the basic skills and fundamentals down pretty well and the sisters did not disappoint during their freshman campaign.

Kaitlyn led the team in hitting percentage and was named to the South Coast Conference First Team in 2010 and Lauren earned SCC Second Team honors.

The sisters’ contributions went a long way in helping secure an 11th South Coast Conference title for the Warriors during Pattison’s 20-year tenure. But disappointment hit ECC when they fell in the third round of the playoffs to eventual state champions L.A. Pierce, something that was all too familiar to the Edwards sisters.

“It was pretty disappointing,” both recalled in unison.

“You wish you could have done more and then you look back at the mistakes,” Lauren added. “But it was a good learning experience.”

This year the sisters will look to take on a bigger role as leaders as they work to help El Camino College reclaim the state championship.

“This year we are definitely leaders,” Kaitlyn said.

“It’s our turn to lead the freshmen,” Lauren added. “It’s our turn to show them how we play and what we want to do (on the floor) and then take it from there.”

Pattison has noticed how much the Edwards sisters keep improving, an astonishing feat considering how well they performed last year.

“When they came in, they were tall and skinny,” Pattison said. “They still are tall and skinny but now they have the muscle to go with it. They put in a lot of time lifting, working on power and agility and it has made them much better players.”

It helps that each other’s toughest competition lives in the same house.

“We definitely make each other better,” Kaitlyn said. “We are so competitive, so whether we are on the same team or on a different team we are both great competitors.”

Their competitive nature is something their teammates use often to get the best out of both sisters.

“A lot of times they (the team) will say, ‘Go Kaitlyn!’ just to get me going and start playing better,” Lauren said.

“They pit us against each other but it’s all in fun,” Kaitlyn added.

Lauren also likes to rib her younger sister on the fact that she is older and makes sure she does not forget it.

“Oh yeah,” Kaitlyn laughed. “(She tells me) all the time.”

The sisters enjoy their sibling rivalry and even have a competition on who will get the most kills this season, with a bowl of ice cream on the line.

As this is their sophomore season, it appears the sisters’ time together could soon come to an end.

Lauren is looking at many transfer opportunities after this season, both inside and outside the state of California, as is Kaitlyn. The sisters have been playing together in some form or another for their entire lives, but they both see the possibility of finally splitting up as another challenge to embrace.

“It would be a real learning experience for us if we did separate,” Lauren says.

Whether they stay together or go their own way after El Camino College, Kaitlyn summed it all up pretty effectively.

“We’re best friends anyway, so either way we will be fine.”

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