

Billiken volleyball freshman among nation's best

Freshman Mallory Dillon's short career has proved to have a large impact for SLU Volleyball this season.

Dillon is among the nation's top Freshman currently ranking 22nd in NCAA statistics for her 4.26 kills per set. This places her second in Atlantic-10 standings and first overall for the Billikens. Dillon has also earned All-Tournament team plaudits for her performance at both the Comfort Inn Invitational and the Billiken Challenge. She garnered the first weekly award of the season for SLU, named Atlantic-10 Rookie of the week for the period of Sept. 2-8.

Dillon is part of an impressive class for the Billikens. Input from more than 120 colleges at PrepVolleyball.com awarded SLU "High Honorable Mention" for the 2013 freshman class. She is joined by **Maryann Ejele** (Virginia Beach, Va./Princess Anne), **Danielle Rygelski** (St. Charles, Mo./Francis Howell), **Ashley Gagen** (Belleville, Ill./Althoff Catholic), and **Taylor Paulson** (Louisville, Ky./Assumption).

The team was what drew Dillon the most to SLU, "I knew I didn't want to be too far from home for school. I loved all the coaches when I first met them and felt like I really fit in with the girls." Former rival and Freshman stand-out Danielle Rygelski is one of those teammates. Dillon and Rygelski played for rival high school and club teams, but decided to put any animosity to rest when choosing to play together at SLU.

"I realized it was probably better to play with her than against her," Rygelski said. This partnership has proved to be fruitful for the team with Dillon and Rygelski ranking second and third respectively in Atlantic-10 standings for kills per set.

Prior to her career as a Billiken, Dillon, a St. Charles native attended Francis Howell High School and played for St. Louis High Performance and St. Louis CYC Volleyball clubs. Dillon elected to sit out her senior year of high school in order to seek better competition. Open gyms in Kirkwood and a rigorous work out regimen helped her to prepare for the next level.

Her secret to success is not due to any wild superstitions, "Communicating well with my teammates is what helps me to be successful," Dillon commented, "I also try to focus on each individual play and not worry about the one before it." Her goals for personal accomplishment translate into goals for the team. Dillon has high hopes for SLU Volleyball (4-9) expecting to secure an Atlantic-10 championship and NCAA run during her career.

"We are a really young team, as we develop we will keep on getting better and better," Dillon said. Off the court, Dillon listed traveling as one of her favorite parts of being on the SLU Volleyball team. She views traveling as an opportunity for the team to spend time together and get to know each other.

Away from the team, Dillon enjoys spending time outside boating with her family. Older sister Megan plays volleyball for Lindenwood University.

Dillon and the Billikens return to action next weekend, Sept. 27 with the opening of Atlantic 10 play. The Billikens take on Duquesne in Pittsburgh on Sept. 27 and Dayton in Ohio on Sept. 29. SLU returns to Chaifetz Oct. 11 vs. Duquesne Friday, Oct. 11 and Sunday Oct. 13 vs. Fordham.