

SPECIAL COMMEMORATIVE SECTION

MAGIC
MOMENT



Cissna Park star Addison Lucht celebrated the school's first state title with her championship medal — and her teammates.

Robin Scholz photos/The News-Gazette



A small school with a big tradition, **Cissna Park** earned a place in IHSA lore by winning its first state title

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CELEBRATING CISSNA PARK

ZACH PIATT

HISTORIC TITLE RUN



I wasn't able to make the trip to CEF-CU Arena in 2023 when the

Cissna Park volleyball team made its first state finals appearance in eight years, but I could hear it in coach Josh Landon's voice over the phone.

The Timberwolves may have lost both of their matches to finish fourth in Class 1A, but Landon knew his team had something special coming in the near future.

Then-seniors Ava Morrical and Brooklyn Stadel laid the foundation, and with sophomore standouts Addison Lucht, Josie Neukomm and Sophie Duis coming into their own and a boatload of talent waiting in the wings of junior varsity and junior high, Cissna Park was set up to get back to that state stage.

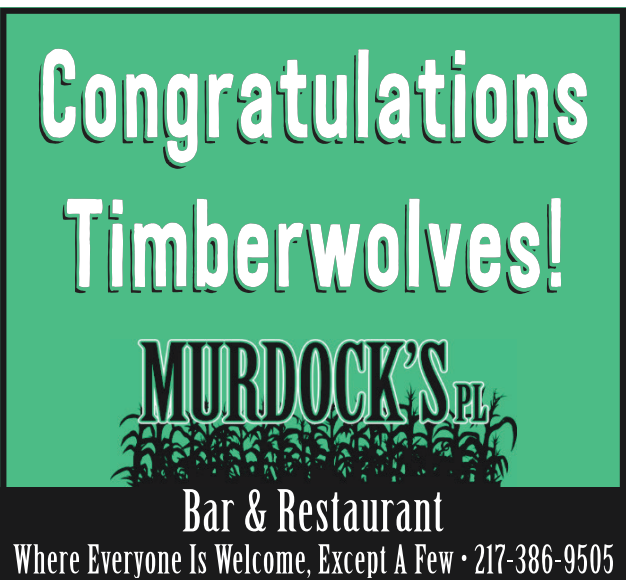
And it did just that in 2024, with the now-junior trio leading the way. I was there for that one.

I saw the Timberwolves again lose in the



Robin Scholz/The News-Gazette

Cissna Park players and coaches celebrate their Class 1A state volleyball championship at CEF-CU Arena in Normal. The Timberwolves swept Stockton 25-11, 25-14 to capture their first state title in any sport. 'Doing it with the people you love so much and are with for hours and hours every week makes it really special,' senior Sophie Duis said.



CELEBRATING CISSNA PARK

STARTED LONG AGO

1A semifinals before bouncing back with a three-set comeback win to place third. I'll be honest, the bulk of my attention that Saturday was on Mahomet-Seymour winning its first 3A state title, but I couldn't help but notice Landon and the Timberwolves' reactions to ending their season with a win.

Landon pumped his fist to the seemingly half of all of Cissna Park crowd in attendance as he walked off the court, getting emotional as his fans showered him and his players with cheers. That emotion returned in the post-match press conference, and he couldn't hide the sniffles and tears while describing what that season and that team meant to him. The players, after a collective "Aww" at their coach's reaction, were soon crying themselves.

This meant something to the Timberwolves. It was their fourth state trophy in program history, but they knew how close they were to finally winning it all, and the soon-to-be seniors knew they had one more shot.

That brought us to this fall, and the expectations were already swirling in August at The News-Gazette's annual Faces of Fall event. Neukomm was there, and she was throwing out answers like "The one goal in mind is to be a state champion" and "We expect it of ourselves." I may have teed her up a little with my questions, but this was a different kind of confidence. I've had countless preseason interviews, where athletes and coaches say they want to win a state title, but this one felt more like a "We will win state" type of deal.

And the Timberwolves played like it all year. After a 15-0 start, they lost their first match to 4A Bolingbrook in Champaign Central's annual SETtember Fest on Sept. 26. They didn't lose again.

The Timberwolves dominated their way back to CEFCU Arena, sweeping every post-



Robin Scholz/The News-Gazette



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season opponent while Landon never called a timeout from the sideline.

That dominance only continued at state. Cissna Park controlled its semifinal match against Tremont with a 25-19, 25-20 win before having its way with Stockton 25-11, 25-14 in the championship to finish the season with a program-record 40 wins.

Neukomm's confidence had ramped up following the semifinal victory, as she made declarations like "We're not done yet," "We got it" and "I'm expecting that championship trophy."

She proved herself right, but to do it how they did it, with that lopsided of a win in the state championship match against the returning 1A runner-up, was incredible to watch. Same for Landon at the head of the bench.

"I did not expect that. I expected a grind," Landon said. "We talked about it (that Friday) night. 'It's going to be a grind. It's going to be a dog-fight.' It had those moments at

different times in the match, but our girls continued to strive to be better and never let the ball hit the floor."

Same deal for the players on the court.

"I did not expect that at all," Lucht added. "Obviously, they're a great team, and we don't take anything away from them, but we were able to zone in and go on a run. We were just so locked in as a team and had the right mindset that I don't think anything was slowing us down."

Every point prompted a bigger roar from the Cissna Park faithful, who took up an entire corner of CEFCU Arena's lower level. They got even louder as Landon walked across the stage afterward and was finally announced as a state champion. Facing the crowd with an emotional smile, he raised both fists in the air, this time with a gold medal around his neck.

"It's amazing to have the support from them," Landon said of the Cissna Park fans. "They're all-in, and they've been all-in since day one when

the season started. It's not like they're randomly showing up now. They've been packing our gym, and they're there to support us on the road. It's huge for our girls to feel that support. They have no idea how much of a difference they're making in these people's lives. It just brings so much joy to the community."

To make it to the state finals in the first place is challenging enough, but to do it three years in a row and improve every single time is extremely impressive. This was what the Timberwolves expected all along, but it becomes fairy-tale-esque when you look at the last three seasons as a whole.

"We're blessed to be here for a third year in a row," Landon said. "They've been in the spotlight and on the big stage, and they were awestruck a few years ago. You experience it, and you embrace that opportunity to be treated like athletes on TV. They've embraced it, and that's just the maturity in

them. We'll take the experiences we've had and cherish them forever."

Don't think the Timberwolves' stretch of success is over, though. Like Neukomm said, they're not done yet. She and her fellow seniors may have gone out on top, but get ready to learn names like Mady Marcott, Ava Henrichs, Kendyl Neukomm, Ella Schluter, Marina Day and a slew of others. They don't know what it's like to miss out on the state experience, and they have the talent to continue that trend.

"Our run isn't over," Lucht said. "They're going to have multiple deep postseason runs over the next few years. We set the standard, and every class below us is going to try to rise up to that. Our seventh-grade junior high team just got second in state last year, so we've got a long line of kids really excited to play for Cissna Park."

Zach Piatt covers high school sports at The News-Gazette. His email is zpiatt@news-gazette.com.



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Kaeb Sales would like to extend a huge congratulations to the Cissna Park volleyball team on their state championship victory! The players and coaches have represented our school and community so well, and we are so proud!

We are CP!

GO FIGURE

Cissna Park volleyball made history by winning a Class 1A state championship. Here's what you need to know about the historic team:



Robin Scholz/The News-Gazette

The Coach

Josh Landon. He also doubles as the Cissna Park athletic director, but Landon is no stranger to the area volleyball coach. The 2025 season marked his 20th in charge of the Timberwolves that also has included a state runner-up finish in 2015, a pair of third-place finishes in 2014 and 2024 and a fourth-place finish in 2023. Landon will enter the 2026 season needing just nine wins to hit 500 for his career as he sports a 491-203-11 record at Cissna Park that has include 13 of his teams winning at least 20 matches. Nicole Trumble and Gabby Wessels served as his assistant coaches this season.



Robin Scholz/The News-Gazette

The Team

A blend of seniors and underclassmen paved the way for the Timberwolves, with senior Addison Lucht delivering a team-high 339 kills, junior Mady Marcott supplying a team-high 491 assists and 58 assists, senior Sophie Duis making a team-high 54 blocks and sophomore Kendyl Neukomm contributing a team-high 260 digs. The roster:

No.	Name	Year	Ht.	Pos.
1	Ella Schluter	So.	5-5	S
2	Faith Bohlamnn	Sr.	5-5	DS
3	Macy Sinn	Sr.	5-7	DS
4	Emma Malabehar	Sr.	5-7	OPP
5	Mady Marcott	Jr.	5-7	S
6	Marina Day	So.	5-11	MB
7	Laura Eisenmann	Jr.	5-6	DS
9	Addison Lucht	Sr.	5-10	OH
10	Kendyl Neukomm	So.	5-6	Libero
11	Sophie Duis	Sr.	5-10	MB
12	Josie Neukomm	Sr.	5-10	MB
13	Addison Tipsord	Sr.	5-7	OH
14	Annika Stadel	Jr.	5-9	OPP
15	Ava Henrichs	Jr.	5-9	OPP
16	Faith Kaeb	Sr.	5-8	OPP
21	Lauryn Hamrick	Sr.	5-9	OPP
28	Kloe Clauss	Jr.	5-7	OPP



Robin Scholz/The News-Gazette

The Results

Wins happened early, often and frequently for Cissna Park. So much that the 40 victories represents a new single-season school record. It started with a 25-7, 25-15 sweep of Grant Park on Aug. 26 at Cissna Park's annual Timberwolf Tip-Off and concluded with a 25-11, 25-14 sweep of Stockton last Saturday in the Class 1A state championship game.

Date	Opponent	Result
Aug. 26	Grant Park	W 2-0
Aug. 26	Clifton Central	W 2-0
Aug. 30	Manteno	W 2-0
Aug. 30	Bishop McNamara	W 2-1
Sept. 3	Tri-Valley	W 2-0
Sept. 5	Beecher	W 2-1
Sept. 9	Salt Fork	W 2-0
Sept. 10	St. Thomas More	W 2-0
Sept. 11	Chrisman	W 2-0
Sept. 15	Clifton Central	W 2-0
Sept. 16	Georgetown-Ridge Farm	W 2-0
Sept. 18	BHRA	W 2-0
Sept. 23	Westville	W 2-0
Sept. 25	Armstrong-Potomac	W 2-0
Sept. 26	Rochester	W 2-0
Sept. 26	Bolingbrook	L 2-0
Sept. 27	Washington	W 2-0
Sept. 27	Windsor/Stew-Stras	W 2-0
Sept. 27	Evansville (Ind.) Memorial	W 2-0
Oct. 1	St. Joseph-Ogden	W 2-0
Oct. 2	Hoopeston Area	W 2-0
Oct. 6	Paxton-Buckley-Loda	W 2-0
Oct. 7	Oakwood	W 2-0
Oct. 9	Milford	W 2-0
Oct. 14	Schlarman	W 2-0
Oct. 15	Bishop McNamara	W 2-1
Oct. 18	LeRoy	W 2-0
Oct. 18	River Forest Trinity	W 2-0
Oct. 18	Mt. Pulaski	W 2-1
Oct. 18	Hartsburg-Emden	W 2-1
Oct. 18	Pontiac	W 2-0
Oct. 21	Watseka	W 2-0
Oct. 23	Iroquois West	W 2-0
Oct. 27	Milford	W 2-0
Oct. 29	Gibson City-Melvin-Sibley	W 2-0
Oct. 30	Fieldcrest	W 2-0
Nov. 4	Dwight	W 2-0
Nov. 6	Lexington	W 2-0
Nov. 10	Windsor/Stew-Stras	W 2-0
Nov. 14	Tremont	W 2-0
Nov. 15	Stockton	W 2-0

CELEBRATING CISSNA PARK



Morgan Sinn/courtesy

The state-champion Timberwolves roll into town after winning it all.

JOSH LANDON: FROM THE COACH'S DESK

It was a ride of a lifetime

Words cannot begin to describe the feeling we as a coaching staff, team, school and community experienced during the state finals — and more importantly winning the Class 1A state championship.

We have been blessed with multiple trips to the state finals, but this year's trip had a different feeling to it.

Many might say that, "well, it's the third trip for the senior class or you had everyone back with the exception of two seniors from last year's team." While that is true, the team had a different mindset and, quite honestly, that mindset didn't change throughout much of the postseason. They were focused on the match at hand and always striving to be the best version of themselves during that match.

There were plenty of sacrifices throughout the year, but those sacrifices are what made this team so successful. Each and every player bought into their role and put the team first. These selfless acts did not go unnoticed and the result was winning the state title.

Support

While it is cliché to say, the support that we have received from the school and community is off the charts!

From the beginning of the year, the gym was packed. As the season progressed, the crowds grew no matter

the distance we played. The beauty behind the support is while they were there to watch these amazing young women play a game, they were there to support these amazing people. That is oftentimes overlooked in sports as the focus is on the success of the team or program, rather than the makeup of the team.

This team is filled with great kids that are full of character and as humble as they come.

Legacy

The journey to the state championship was filled with many bumps along the way. We won together, but more importantly, over the years we lost together, and it brought this group closer. Teammates built stronger bonds and developed a trust in each other like no other.

Each graduating class or team will leave a legacy and it's up to them to decide that legacy. This group, with the help of many upperclassmen before them and underclassmen following them, have stamped their legacy with a state championship.

What they will one day realize is the amount of joy they not only got to experience, but were able to provide to the school and community, both young and old.

They are champions on the court, but bigger champions off the court!

Josh Landon coaches volleyball at Cissna Park. His email is josh.landon@cpschool.org.



Robin Scholz/The News-Gazette

It was a sea of blue at CEFCU Arena in Normal for Cissna Park run to a title, loyal fans following the Timberwolves on their road to glory.

RACHEL HURLIMAN: FROM THE PRINCIPAL'S DESK

Oh, the places they'll go!

Where do I begin talking about this extraordinary group of ladies?!?! They have always found a way to achieve on the court, in the classroom and in life.

Proud of them is such an understatement. Cissna Park is so fortunate to have the best coaches around to lead these ladies. Josh Landon has been showing up for these ladies for the last 21 years, and his leadership has gone above and beyond for Cissna Park schools. Coach Trumble has been his right hand for all 21 years, and her dedication to her teams has not gone unnoticed. Coach Wessels, as an alumni coming to give back to Cissna Park, is truly priceless.

Thank you, coaches, for all you do for Cissna Park schools and Lady T-Wolves volleyball.

Cissna Park community is the best around! They have shown support to these ladies since the fourth grade and will continue to do so. They show up for all of our students every day and are so proud of all of our accomplishments. The saying "It takes a village" is the true definition of what we do here at CP! Parents and guardians are the reason why we have amazing student-athletes. They taught them hard work, integrity, and how to be great human beings. Thank you, parents and guardians, for everything you have done.

Team first is something our team exemplifies. They show this daily and continue to support each other on and off the court. Work ethic is undeniably present among the players and coaches. They know what needs to be done to be great, and this has been shown every year, especially this year!



Provided

Volleyballs signed by Cissna Park's state champions were auctioned off to benefit the school's FFA program.

One common goal was held by the team. The girls sacrifice for this goal to be the most successful team. The ladies were not scared to seize the moment!!! We R CP!

Loveable group of ladies. We LOVE these ladies for what they stand for, their dedication, hard work, and love for each other. They know what the number one priorities are: God, Family, School, and Team Victorious = FIRST STATE CHAMPIONSHIP!!! Let's go, Timberwolves!!! Yes!!!

Excellence is what we strive for at Cissna Park. Everyone wants what is best for the students, staff, coaches, families, and community!

Seniors, from the bottom of my heart, THANK YOU for all you have done. These memories came from all of your hard work and dedication. I appreciate you!

State champs, baby! Thank you coaches, players, parents, school and community.

Rachel Hurliman is principal at Cissna Park. Her email is rachel.hurliman@cpschool.org

MATT DANIELS: FROM THE SPORTS EDITOR'S DESK

State title a sign of dedication and talent



Lauryn Hamrick, Addison Lucht and Macy Sinn walked into The News-Gazette office on Nov. 9. A Sunday. A day off for the trio of Cissna Park student-athletes.

But Hamrick, Lucht and Sinn showed up in Champaign on that Sunday morning dressed in Columbia blue Timberwolves' basketball uniforms to take part in our newspaper's annual Faces of Winter event. Enthusiastically and without complaint.

Even though the Cissna Park volleyball season was still ongoing. A season all three played a role in.

Dedication, mixed in with talent, can produce legendary results.

Which is what Hamrick, Lucht, Sinn and the rest of the Cissna Park volleyball team is now for the Iroquois County village nestled about an hour north of Champaign along Route 49.

The Timberwolves' volleyball program made history last Saturday, with Cissna Park sweeping Stockton in the Class 1A state championship match at CEFCU Arena in Normal to cap a memorable 40-1 season with the most coveted prize small-school volleyball teams: a state championship trophy.

All business

When Hamrick, Lucht and Sinn arrived in Champaign, volleyball was still their main focus. The Timberwolves had to play a super-sectional match the following night on Nov. 10 against perennial power Windsor/Stewardson-Strasburg in Heyworth. Another lengthy drive. Followed, of course, by another signature win.

The trio could have opted out of showing up to our event, choosing to rest, sleep and relax ahead of the most pressure-packed and highly-scrutinized matches of their career. Instead, they represented their school and their community. They embraced the opportunity to showcase Cissna Park.

Which is what they did throughout this fall. Lucht is a small-town treasure, with the Northwestern softball signee — she inked her letter of intent with the Wildcats on Nov. 12 before Cissna Park ventured to Normal two days later to start its state tournament experience — a multi-sport standout who dozens of grade-school kids in and around Cissna Park will emulate for years to come.

But it's not just the Lucht show with the Timberwolves.

Team terrific

A team doesn't win 40 matches and a state title with just one standout athlete. Coach Josh Landon's group had complementary pieces all around, from fellow seniors Josie Neukomm and Sophie Duis giving opponents plenty to worry about at the net to sophomore libero Kendyl Neukomm's defensive prowess to the passing ability of junior Mady Marcott and sophomore Ella Schluter.

It all added up to a winning combination the likes of which Cissna Park, and our area, has rarely seen. The Timberwolves are just the fourth team in The News-Gazette's coverage area to win a state volleyball title, joining St. Thomas More in 2017 and 2021, and Mahomet-Seymour in 2024.

Now, Hamrick, Lucht, Sinn and other multi-sport athletes for Cissna Park will try to add to their legacy this winter on the basketball court. The Timberwolves reached the 1A state tournament in that sport a season ago, ultimately placing third, with many of the same athletes who helped the volleyball team make history.

In the nearly 50 years the IHSA has hosted both a volleyball and girls' basketball state tournament, no public school has won both a state title in both volleyball and girls' basketball. Quincy Notre Dame accomplished the feat in Class 2A in the 2011-12 school year and Benet did so in 4A during the 2014-15 school year.

Can Cissna Park continue to make history? Don't bet against it.

Because dedication, mixed in with talent, can produce legendary results.

Matt Daniels is sports editor at The News-Gazette. His email is mdaniels@news-gazette.com.