

PREP INSIDER

Setting up the spike

All pieces must come together fast for kill shot

By COLIN DONOHUE
Special to The Commercial Appeal

Highlights glorify the emphatic, the exciting, the hair-raising moments of sporting events in bite-sized portions. Audiences feast on an overdose of mammoth home runs, sensational dunks, bone-jarring hits. And in volleyball, spectators dig the spike.

"The hitter gets all the glory," Briarcrest Christian coach Clare Boggess said. "Putting the ball down fast and hard is what everyone wants to see."

Said Germantown coach Barbara Whitaker, "That's the one that scores points for you. If a hitter's good enough, she can put the ball down wherever she is."

But the big hit is always the conclusion. As is true with other sports, the lead-up to the fantastic strike is never accentuated, the thankless work not featured as prominently.

"Without a pass and a set, you can't have a hit," Houston senior Brittany Trapani said. "They're pretty important. They're the ones that set the play."

Trapani's success is contingent on her team's initial pass and subsequent set. As obvious as it sounds, a hitter is useless if she doesn't get the ball.

"If we can get the ball up to the setter, our hitters can swing away," Collierville coach Lisa Lewis said.

The setter, though, is the penultimate step in a big hit. First, someone needs to, well, set-up the setter. Lewis relies on senior Amanda Reinmann to handle that responsibility.

Reinmann plays a position called libero, which allows her to sub in for only the back row players. She is essentially Collierville's defensive specialist, digging a return volley and making the first pass.

"It's my job to start the whole play," Reinmann said. "It always feels good when one of the other teammates gets a good hit."

Not all schools use a libero, though, because it is such a focused position.

"I'm not a specialist person," Houston head coach Becky Pendleton said. "I like to have my players play all around."

Finally, after a pass and a set, the spike ensues. The hitter, though, doesn't take wild, capricious swings at the ball. A successful strike requires split-second, mid-air decision making.

"You have to read the blocker; you have to find the holes," Lewis said. "You have to decide to hit around the block, go over the block. There are so many things."

Which is why getting stuffed by an opposing team's blockers is not unusual. How a player reacts to that humbling experience could determine her longevity as a hitter.

"You have to be confident in your ability," Boggess said. "You just have to be confident that if you're going up against a big block that you can go through it."

Of course, a perfect mental make-up is nothing without consistency and wherewithal.

"I have some hitters who can flat out hit the ball," she said. "But if they can't hit it over the net two or three times, what good can they do?"

A flawless spike is an intricate, multi-step process that culminates in mere seconds. Indeed, it's a truncated process, but with a thunderous payoff.

"It's awesome," Trapani said. "It's like a huge adrenaline rush because you just did something amazing."



Nikki Boertman/The Commercial Appeal

Houston's Brittany Trapani understands as well as anyone the team mechanics of the spike. But the payoff is well worth it, she says. "It's like a huge adrenaline rush."

ATHLETES OF THE WEEK

FOOTBALL

OFFENSE

■ **GRANT JESSEN, St. George's running back:** A 6-0, 190-pound junior, Jessen rushed for 149 yards on 17 carries with three touchdown runs and passed for a touchdown in the Gryphons' 35-34 double-overtime win over St. Benedict.

DEFENSE

■ **TRIPP MCCRARY, Briarcrest Christian linebacker:** A 5-11, 186-pound senior, McCrary had seven solo tackles, two for loss, and two more assisted tackles in the Saints 20-0 homecoming win over Treadwell.

OTHER SPORTS

BOYS

■ **PAUL ZAMPINI, Houston golfer:** Zampini, a senior, earned medalist honors shooting a 34 over nine holes in a 145-174 win over Arlington to improve the Mustangs' record to 20-1.

GIRLS

■ **DANIELLE MAYERAUX, Collierville soccer:** Mayeaux, a senior midfielder/defender, scored a goal and assisted junior Morgan McBride on the other in the Lady Dragons' 2-0 win over White Station to improve to 6-1 this season.

Nominations: Coaches can nominate candidates for Athlete of the Week by calling 529-2879 or e-mailing sports@commercialappeal.com. The deadline is noon Monday.

THE FOOTBALL DANDY DOZEN

	Rec	Last Week
1. MELROSE	3-1	2
2. RIDGEWAY	4-0	3
3. ECS	4-0	10
4. GERMANTOWN	2-1	4
5. OLIVE BRANCH	2-0	5
6. COVINGTON	3-0	6
7. WOODDALE	4-0	9
8. MUS	2-2	1
9. CBHS	2-2	7
10. WEST MEMPHIS	1-1	11
11. WHITE STATION	3-0	12
12. HOUSTON	3-0	NR

GIRLS SOCCER TOP FIVE

	Rec	Last Week
1. ST. AGNES	9-0-0	1
2. COLLIERVILLE	6-1-0	2
3. ECS	5-2-2	4
4. HOUSTON	6-2-1	3
5. WHITE STATION	4-3	5

VOLLEYBALL TOP FIVE

	Rec	Last Week
1. SOUTHAVEN	22-0	1
2. ST. BENEDICT	17-1	2
3. OLIVE BRANCH	18-2	3
4. BRIARCREST	10-2	4
5. IC	15-5	NR

THIS WEEK'S TOP EVENTS

(subject to change)

TODAY

Girls soccer: 4:30 p.m. — Briarcrest at Hutchison. 6:30 p.m. — St. Mary's at Collierville. 7 p.m. — Ridgeway vs. Germantown at Farmington.
Golf: 3:30 p.m. — Houston vs. Bolton at Quail Ridge.

THURSDAY

Girls soccer: 4 p.m. — St. George's at ECS. 6:30 p.m. — St. Agnes at Briarcrest. 8 p.m. — Germantown vs. Nashville Father Ryan at Trevecca University.
Golf: 3:30 p.m. — Houston vs. Germantown at TBA.

FRIDAY

Girls soccer: 5 p.m. — BGA at Collierville. 6 p.m. — Germantown vs. Pope John Paul II at Donelson Christian Academy. 7 p.m. — Oak Ridge at Houston.

SATURDAY

Girls soccer: 11 a.m. — Germantown vs. Smyrna at Donelson Christian Academy. 1 p.m. — Chattanooga Baylor at Houston. 3 p.m. — Jackson (Miss.) Prep at Collierville.

SUNDAY

Girls soccer: Noon — Siegel at Houston, Oak Ridge at Collierville.
MONDAY
Golf: 8 a.m. — District 15-AAA tournament at T.O. Fuller.
Girls soccer: 7 p.m. — ECS vs. Germantown at Farmington.

Submit top events to sports@commercialappeal.com

CBHS catcher Forsythe headed to Tennessee

LONGTIME CHRISTIAN BROTHERS baseball coach Buster Kelso describes it as the perfect fit for his standout senior catcher, Blake Forsythe.

"Yeah, they flew him up there (last weekend) and made him a nice offer. He slept on it, and then gave them the OK," said Kelso, referring to Forsythe's commitment last week to play baseball at Tennessee.

"The fit is perfect because they're going to need a catcher. Their catcher this year (J.P. Arencibia) is going to be a first-round draft choice. ... And in baseball, because of the limitation on scholarships, you've got to go with the people who are going to come in and be a good fit."

Forsythe, a 2005 All-Metro selection who batted .385 as a junior last season for a Purple Wave squad that finished 40-3, said Monday he intends to do just that.

"They have, I think, one other catcher, but he's a multi-position player, and that sort of opens up the door for me. I can probably earn some playing time as a freshman, which would be great," said Forsythe, who tied CBHS' single-season record for home runs last year with 10 to go with his 42 RBI, 10 doubles and three triples.

"Just the atmosphere was what I loved most about my visit. I thought that pretty much closed the deal. It was an offer I couldn't refuse."

Kelso said the 6-2, 200-pound



Nikki Boertman/The Commercial Appeal

Former Christian Brothers High coach Tom Nix greets members of his former football team after Nix received an award for his 50 years of service to the school at halftime Friday.

Forsythe will be the centerpiece this season for a Purple Wave baseball team that returns just five seniors.

Jasper closing in on state record

Ridgeway senior kicker and recent LSU commitment Josh Jasper needs just two field goals to tie the state's all-time record for career field goals owned by Brentwood Academy's John Vaughn, who made 39 from 1999-2002.

But is Jasper counting?

"My mom pays more attention to it

than I do," said Jasper, the 2005 Mr. Football kicker of the year as well as the Shelby-Metro record holder for career field goals.

"I concentrate on the 'W' mainly. I mean, I do keep track of it somewhat, but I just worry about wins."

Jasper, who last week at Hopkinsville (Ky.) kicked field goals of 26, 30, 39 and 53 yards to give him 37 for his career, committed to LSU last month following a kicking camp at the school.

"I did really well. I think I was 17-for-17 or 18-for-18 or something like that. (The kicks) went back to 55 (yards),"

Jasper said. "They called me up about two weeks after that and went ahead and offered me. They gave me a couple of days to think it over ... and I went ahead and committed. They'd said they wanted an answer as soon as I could give them one."

Jasper, who last week had 9-of-9 kickoff attempts go for touchbacks (with two of them, according to Ridgeway coach John Cooley, traveling through the uprights), said Monday that Auburn, Colorado, Mississippi State, Ole Miss and the University of Memphis had also shown interest in his services, but had not yet offered.

"I would feel comfortable with him attempting 58- and 59-yard (field goals) in a game because he's done it in practice a number of times," Cooley said. "I mean, he kicked two kickoffs between the uprights the other night."

"It's a tremendous advantage, too. Every time we score, the defense starts at the 20. I mean, he's kicked every kickoff except two this season into the end zone, and both of them were right down there around the 1 or the 2."

Briefly

■ Former CBHS head football coach and athletic director **Tom Nix** was honored last Friday at halftime of the Purple Wave's 6-0 loss to Melrose for his 50 years of service to the school. Nix is Shelby-Metro's fourth-winningest prep football coach with 241 career wins at Whitehaven (1951-55) and CBHS (1956-1984). ... Memphis University School will celebrate the grand opening of its new multi-sport stadium Friday when the Owls host Chattanooga Baylor. The festivities begin at 5:30 p.m. with a tailgating party.

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