

With college choice made, Eppink focuses on now

By Chris Nelsen • Star correspondent • August 28, 2008

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With numerous college volleyball scholarships on the table, the Westfield High School standout chose Notre Dame after one official visit to its campus in South Bend.

"Everything seemed perfect," said Eppink, who verbally committed to the Irish in October 2007. "From an athletic and academic standpoint, I didn't feel there was a better situation than Notre Dame."

With more scholarship offers sure to come, Eppink made her choice last year as a junior. She picked Notre Dame over Kentucky, Minnesota and Purdue.

"I didn't want to wait and have (Notre Dame) offer my scholarship to someone else," she said this week. "I felt comfortable with my decision, so there was no point to wait."

Eppink, a 6-foot-2 middle hitter, also wanted to avoid having the recruiting process drag on and interfere with her senior year.

"(Committing to Notre Dame) was like a weight lifted off my shoulders," she said. "Now, I can just concentrate on my schoolwork and finishing my high school volleyball career on a strong note."

Eppink began drawing attention from colleges through her play on Team Indiana Volleyball, a premiere junior club based in Indianapolis. She joined the team three years ago.

"Since we play in a lot of big tournaments, there's always scouts watching you," she said. "That's where most of the exposure comes from."

Eppink's stock rose further after last year's high school season when she recorded 400 kills, 137 blocks, 65 digs and 48 aces. The Indiana Coaches of Girls Sports Association named her

to its Class 4A All-State first team.

"Hilary has a tremendous amount of ability," said Westfield coach Stacie Pagnard. "We could be down by 10 or 11 points, and she's the kind of player that gets a huge block or kill and totally swings the momentum back in our favor."

Eppink's concern now is leading Westfield (4-2) to a successful season. Entering this week, she had 70 kills, 23 digs, 17 blocks and 16 aces.

Westfield is scheduled to play at 5:30 p.m. today at Avon.

"Everybody knows Hilary is a great player, but she's not cocky about it and she's always one of the hardest-working people," said senior outside hitter Leah Kappen. "She's definitely a good role model for the younger players to follow."
