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## Royals player is ready to be a Boilermaker

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Even though she has more than two years of high school remaining, Hamilton Southeastern sophomore Kierra Jones verbally committed last week to play volleyball at Purdue University.

Jones helped the Royals to their first sectional title since 1992 this fall. Southeastern fell to eventual Class 4A state champion Cathedral in the Center Grove Regional finals.

Jones took a few minutes to answer some questions about her season and her college decision.

### **Question: How did it feel to win a sectional title this year?**

**Answer:** It was amazing. I just love everything about HSE. Coach (Kathy) Slyder has put an amazing program together where it's a real family atmosphere. She felt like a second mom to me. We could instantly get focused at practice, and that helped a lot.

### **Q: Was it a little bittersweet coming within one game of making it to state?**

**A:** We thought Cathedral was going to be really tough competition. We knew they were a lot bigger, and we were the underdogs, and not a lot of people had faith in us, but everyone on our varsity team had faith, and you could see it in their eyes. They put their hardest effort in to win and play great.

### **Q: You really emerged this year as a solid middle hitter and blocker. What was the key to your improvement?**

**A:** During club tryouts, they just saw something in me, and they put me on the 1s (top team), and it scared me half to death. But it made me a lot better.

### **Q: Are you playing club volleyball this winter?**

**A:** I play for Team Indiana, and I'm going to be playing on (Team Indiana coach) Larry Perez's (16-1s) team.

### **Q: What made you decide on Purdue?**

**A:** My family and I had been there a couple of times, and I just loved the atmosphere. It's a lot like HSE. The girls really loved the coaches, and they had a real sisterly feel with the assistant coaches. (Head) coach (Dave) Shondell was ambitious, and he wanted me to get a lot better. Anybody that wants me to get better is somebody I want to get coached by. The campus is great, they're well-known academically, and I think it's just going to be a really good experience.

### **Q: Were there any other schools you were considering?**

**A:** I got a lot of questionnaires with a lot of colleges, but I didn't want to be greedy. I'm thankful for the offer, and I think God gave me this (scholarship) offer for a reason, and I just couldn't pass it up. They saw something in me the first time they saw me, and that's all I needed -- for someone to have faith in me."

**Q: Do you know what you want to major in?**

**A:** There are a lot of subjects that I'm interested in, but I haven't decided what I want to major in.

**Q: Does getting the decision out of the way early take a big load off your shoulders?**

**A:** My whole family, it made them so much better. My mom has a lot of stress off of her, and my dad does, too. I'm just glad I don't have to go through it. I can calm down my friends when it comes time to pick their college.

**Q: Do you have any big goals for your next two years of high school?**

**A:** I just want to improve in all my areas. I want to get better in my setting, even though I'm not going to be a setter. I definitely want to improve in passing. I have big goals in blocking and keeping my vertical up, and I want to be a better hitter. I want to get stronger, I want to get faster, everything.

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