

Boddy named National Collegiate Volleyball Federation Division 1 Player of the Year

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NEW ULM - A lot of boys growing up in the New Ulm area are raised on baseball, football or maybe hockey.

Tyler Boddy's family played volleyball. Unfortunately for him, he didn't have the same opportunities for volleyball as he would if he played a different sport.

But maybe that wasn't such a disadvantage after all, because in April Boddy was named the National Collegiate Volleyball Federation Division 1 Player of the Year after he helped lead his school, University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh to the National Championship.

"College volleyball has been very good for me," Boddy said. "Knowing that Minnesota doesn't have boys high school volleyball, it's pretty cool to get the experience to play against people my own age.

"From the time I was 15, I was always playing against college guys. When I got there, it was an eye-opener to see that there is actually good high school volleyball and there are good programs all across Wisconsin."

Volleyball at UW-Oshkosh is a club sport, but the term "club" is a little misleading. The sport is taken very seriously at Oshkosh, and across Wisconsin in general. There aren't many options for men's volleyball at the college level as there are just 82 men's teams across all three divisions while there are 317 Division I women's programs alone.

"It's a lot more serious than most people think it is," Boddy said.

That leaves a lot of quality men's volleyball players searching for places to play and club teams fill the void. At Oshkosh, the men's coach is also the women's head volleyball coach and the teams are given equal attention.

"There aren't that many Division I or II teams so we are the next step below that," Boddy said. "It's taken pretty seriously. We have two coaches, we practice four times a week, we are lifting and working out. It's pretty much like an NCAA program and it's time consuming but it's worth it."

Boddy's Oshkosh team plays a lot of big schools throughout the year and beat Notre Dame in the national championship game in April.

"They think that we are playing against little D3 schools and it's kind of cool to say we play Ball State, Illinois and Notre Dame."

And college volleyball has given Boddy the chance to travel the country. The National Tournament was in Houston this year and the team travels to Las Vegas every year for a tournament, in addition to traveling around the Midwest playing different schools.

Boddy, an elementary education major, just finished his fourth year of college volleyball. Unlike NCAA sanctioned sports, members of club teams can play up to six years and Boddy plans to play one more year next winter as he student teaches in the spring.

He has aspirations of being a coach and has already been an assistant women's coach at Ripon College and last year, he was an assistant on the UW-Oshkosh women's team and he plans to continue with that in the fall.

But after college, he isn't sure what he will do. He is looking into becoming a graduate assistant for a women's team and has already made some connections. He is also considering the possibility of playing professionally overseas.



New Ulm native Tyler Boddy digs the ball in National Collegiate Volleyball Federation Division 1 tournament in

"I don't know if that will pan out," he said. "There are a ton of teams over there. It would be cool to go up against some of that competition. I have worked volleyball camps in the summer and I've worked with coaches that have gone over there and played, so I've gotten some information about that."

In four years of playing college volleyball, Boddy's Oshkosh teams have finished second his sophomore year and ninth his junior year. It was that ninth-place finish that was disappointing to the team.

"Last year, we had a ton of talent and we thought that we were a shoo-in to win it and we didn't," he said. "We had a lot of seniors and a lot of experience on our team and we graduated three all-Americans. This year, we were kind of on a rebuilding year and we had just three starters returning. But we thought it would be kind of tough without those guys around."

UW-Oshkosh entered the 48-team tournament as a No. 3 seed and beat the University of Buffalo, Purdue and Texas in the pool play round. That advanced the team to the pool round where it needed to finish first or second to advance to the bracket play. Oshkosh beat UW-Milwaukee and Utah Valley State before advancing to the single elimination bracket play. They opened the bracket with a win over Ohio State, then beat California-Davis to advance to the semifinals where they beat No. 2 seed Indiana University. That advanced Oshkosh to the championship game where it beat Notre Dame.

Including Boddy, three UW-Oshkosh players were named all-American and he is sure exactly why he was the one chosen as the National Player of the Year.

"It's kind of weird to think about," he said. "Anyone on our team could have gotten it because we have a ton of good players and three All-Americans and two honorable mention all-Americans. I couldn't have done it without those guys. They played really well and I just happened to get chosen."

Obviously, Boddy would like to repeat as champions but says it will be a difficult road.

"We would like to repeat but that is really tough to do," he said. "We have everybody back so repeating is definitely a possibility."