How low can she go? Forest Park's Mindy DeNell gets down plenty low to dig out a Rapid River shot during their match Sept. 17. In back is Gina Graff.

CRYSTAL FALLS—Forest Park's volleyball team completed one of the busiest parts of its schedule on Sept. 17. In seven days, the Lady Trojans played three dual matches plus the Forest Park Invitational.

The finale against Rapid River Sept. 17 at home wound up the way all the other ones did—with a Lady Trojan 3-0 victory (25-13, 25-23, 25-15).

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Of those three dual matches, Rapid River was the toughest opponent. The Rockets boast strong servers and an attacking style, which meant the Lady Trojans had to be on their toes.

FP is now 18-3-3 overall and 6-0 in Skyline Conference play.

Good start: Forest Park took charge of its first set on two service points by Lexi Gussert, three by Abby Sommers and four by Mindy DeNell. FP led 16-8 at that point, and a later triple from Maria Stankewicz wrapped up an easy win.

With three from Gussert and two from Kendra Campbell, FP led 11-5 early in set two. But this time, RR's Neena Brockway fired back with two. Later, Stankewicz served in three. So did Brockway. FP's lead was down to 21-20.

The Rockets tied the set on Averi Kanyuh's ace, making it 23-all. But her next serve went wide, putting FP back in front 24-23. With Hannah Marinoff serving, Gussert's kill earned point 25 and the win.

Out of service: Coach Bjork later noted the Lady Trojans' six service errors in the second set—twice on the first serve after winning a side-out. "That's where we get our kills," she said. "When we're missing serves, we don't get a chance to give Lexi the ball at the net. We're shooting ourselves in the foot!"

Brockway also had a five-point spell midway through the third set, but by then multi-point turns by Gina Graff, Stankewicz and Gussert had given FP a big lead. When the Lady Trojans lost serve, they got it back right away. DeNell's kill was the match-winner.

Rapid River was very focused during the highly competitive second set. That was gone in the third set after FP got the win, but Bjork noted how well the Rockets played. "They're aggressive servers," said Bjork. "I like that. It gives our girls a tough time."

In control: The Lady Trojans tightened their game in the third set, with only two mis-serves. Gussert, who used a powerful jump serve all night, put two into the net.

But that's just quibbling because Gussert also served eight aces to lead her team—in addition to her 17 kills and 18 digs.

Coach Bjork liked how her team covered the floor and how they controlled the first and third sets. “It was a good way to end our long streak of volleyball.

“We’re going to drill hard the rest of this week. We need to be more consistent in every aspect of the game—just fine-tuning stuff again.”

Numbers: Lexi Gussert, 17 kills, 18 digs, 2 blocks, 8 aces. Sam Nylund, 8 k, 3 d. Gina Graff, 19 d. Maria Stankewicz, 6 d, 27 assists, 2 aces. Abby Sommers, 2 d. Mindy DeNell, 20 d, 2 k. Hannah Marinoff, 4 d.

Coming up: The Lady Trojans visit West Iron on Sept. 25 and Carney-Nadeau on Sept. 27. They make the long trip to Mid Peninsula Oct. 1 before their next home match, Oct. 2 vs. North Dickinson.