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Willowbrook's Ahrens headed to Barcelona Dec. 8 as part of a program offered by EXACT Sports

Halie Ahrens, who plays for the Lombard-based FSC Firebirds travel soccer club and for Willowbrook High School, has been announced as one of the members of the Exact 11 team by EXACT Sports—a company in Chicago that helps guide athletes in girls and boys soccer, volleyball, baseball, basketball and football to achieve their goals through college exposure, mental training, and development guidance.

Ahrens, a center back, was nominated for the team by college coaches from EXACT College Showcase

Camps across the nation.

Having played soccer for 12 years, Ahrens, a Lombard resident, has cemented her reputation as a committed player. She will be capitalizing on this opportunity by traveling to Barcelona, Spain, Dec. 8-16 with the Exact 11 team.

While in Spain, Ahrens will train and play games as part of the Exact 11 team against other teams from all over the country.

"It's an incredible opportunity and a way to meet other players from all over the world," said Ahrens. "I'm

hoping to use my soccer experience to educate myself, learn from my teammates, and to connect with other players."

Ahrens, a junior at Willowbrook, was named Defensive Player of the Year for the Warriors in 2022, and was named the FFC Firebirds' Prime Time Player of the Week last month.

With these accolades and after graduating from Willowbrook in 2025, Ahrens has set her sights on continuing her sports journey in college.



Halie Ahrens

CHRIS FOX FILE PHOTO Rock Valley Publishing

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Broncos post a 1-3 record at Fenton's holiday event

Montini concludes season-opening tournament with a win

The Montini Catholic boys basketball team opened its 2023-24 season by playing four games at Fenton High School's Chuck Mitchell Thanksgiving Tournament. The Broncos lost their first three games of the event before completing the tournament with a victory on Saturday.

Montini opened Fenton's eight-team holiday tournament with a 65-44 loss to Fremd on Nov. 20. The Broncos lost a 54-50 decision to Fenton on Nov. 22. Montini suffered a 48-44 loss to Willowbrook on Friday. The Broncos then defeated Chicago's Roberto Clemente Community Academy High School 55-16 in Saturday's seventh-place contest.

Montini trailed Willowbrook 14-10 through one quarter of Friday's game. The Warriors led the Broncos 25-22 at halftime and 39-36 at the end of the third quarter. Montini had opportunities to overtake the Warriors in the game's closing minutes, but the Broncos were unable to sink some key shots.

Montini missed a 3-point shot that would have tied the game in the final seconds. Willowbrook grabbed the rebound and proceeded to make one

of two free throws with 1.2 seconds to play to seal its victory.

Senior Tyler Pavlik scored a team-high 17 points for Montini during Friday's loss to Willowbrook. Senior Maddox Shepherd added 12 points for the Broncos, while junior Drew Church contributed seven points.

Montini built a 19-7 lead over Clemente through one quarter of Saturday's seventh-place game. The Broncos' lead grew to 35-15 by halftime and 51-16 at the end of the third quarter.

Shepherd scored 12 points in Saturday's win, which boosted the team's record to 1-3. Pavlik supplied 11 points, while senior Nicholas Lombardi contributed 10 points. Senior Danny Petersen added seven points, while sophomore Colt Ashton and junior Dillon Bagley scored six and four points, respectively. Sophomore Robert Sansone scored three points, while Church netted two points.

Rolling Meadows defeated Fenton 44-39 in Saturday's championship game of the tournament.

Montini's season continues with this week's games at Saint Ignace and Glenbard South.



CHRIS FOX PHOTOS Rock Valley Pub

Montini Catholic's boys basketball team started its season winning one of four games at Fenton's Chuck Mitchell Thanksgiving Tournament. The Broncos began the event with losses to Fremd and Fenton. Montini fell to 0-3 in the tournament following Friday afternoon's 48-44 loss to Willowbrook. The Broncos completed tournament with Saturday's 55-16 victory over Chicago's Roberto Clemente Academy High School. One photo from Friday's game against Willowbrook shows (above - left to right) Willowbrook senior Andrew Ciesinski and Montini seniors Tyler Pavlik (No. 4) and Danny Petersen (No. 43). Pavlik scored a team-leading 17 points for Montini in Friday's loss to the Warriors. One more photo from Friday's game shows Montini senior Maddox Shepherd (No. 1 - left), who scored points in the contest. Shepherd provided a team-high 12 points Saturday's win, while Pavlik contributed 11 points.

Warriors begin 2023-24 season at Fenton's holiday tournament

Willowbrook wins one of four games and lands a sixth-place finish

Willowbrook's boys basketball team opened its season by winning one of four games and earning a sixth-place finish in Fenton's eight-team Chuck Mitchell Thanksgiving Tournament.

The Warriors opened the tournament with a 71-50 loss to Fenton on Nov. 20. Willowbrook lost 80-57 to Fremd on Nov. 21.

The Warriors defeated Montini Catholic 48-44 on Friday. Willowbrook completed the tournament with Saturday's 61-38 loss to Wheaton Warrenville South.

The Warriors trailed Fenton 16-4 after one quarter of last week's contest. The Bison led Willowbrook 37-15 at halftime and 58-31 after three quarters.

Sophomore Jaylen Griffin scored 13 points for the Warriors in last week's game against Fenton. Senior Andrew Ciesinski added 10 points for Willowbrook. Juniors Filip Palutkiewicz and Jaden Royal contributed eight points each for the Warriors.

Willowbrook trailed Fremd 19-11 after one quarter, 39-24 at halftime and 62-38 after three quarters.

Sophomore Otis Powell scored a team-leading 25 points for the Warriors in last week's loss to Fremd. Ciesinski provided 13 points and 13 rebounds. Royal added seven points.

The Warriors led Montini 14-10 after one quarter and 25-22 at halftime of Friday's contest.

Willowbrook owned a 39-36 lead at the end of the third quarter.

The Broncos missed a late 3-point shot that would have tied the score at 47-47 in the closing seconds. Senior Noah Boyd grabbed the rebound and was fouled by Montini. He went to the free-throw line and made one of two attempts with 1.2 seconds to play to provide the final point of the game.

Powell scored 14 points and grabbed seven rebounds in Willowbrook's win over Montini. Ciesinski scored 13 points and snared a team-leading 16 rebounds. Boyd supplied 10 points, including the last-second free throw and a pair of baskets from 3-point range.

Senior Kenyon Rhodes added seven points.

Wheaton Warrenville South led the Warriors 17-4 after one quarter of Saturday's fifth-place game in Bensenville.

The Tigers' lead stood at 32-15 at halftime and 53-32 after three quarters.

Powell provided 14 points for the Warriors in Saturday's contest. Ciesinski scored eight points. Boyd and Palutkiewicz netted five points each.

Powell was named to the All-Tournament Team at Fenton's holiday event.

Rolling Meadows beat Fenton 44-39 in Saturday's championship game at the holiday tournament in Bensenville.

Willowbrook's season continues with this Friday's West Suburban Gold Conference home game against Morton.



Willowbrook's boys basketball team began its season by playing four games at Fenton's Chuck Mitchell Thanksgiving Tournament. The Warriors lost their first two games of the event, falling to Fenton and Fremd. Willowbrook then defeated Montini Catholic 48-44 on Friday. The Warriors finished the tournament with Saturday's 61-38 loss to Wheaton Warrenville South in the fifth-place game. Willowbrook senior Andrew Ciesinski (No. 33 - left) contributed 13 points and 16 rebounds during Friday's victory over the Broncos. Another photo from Willowbrook's game against Montini Catholic shows senior Noah Boyd (No. 25 - bottom left), who scored 10 points in the contest.



CHRIS FOX PHOTOS Rock Valley F

Willowbrook sophomore Otis Powell (2) was named to the event's All-Tournament Team. Powell scored 25 points in the Warriors' loss to Fremd. He provided 14 points and 14 rebounds in Friday's win over Montini Catholic. He scored 14 points in Saturday's loss to Wheaton Warrenville South.

Warriors place fourth in own Thanksgiving invite

Bruschuk and Gusman named to event's All-Tournament Team

The Willowbrook girls basketball team finished play at its own Thanksgiving invite with last week's losses to Montini Catholic and Plainfield East. The Warriors won one of four games in their five-team, round-robin event to post a fourth-place finish.

Willowbrook lost 60-32 to Montini on Nov. 20. One night later, the Warriors closed out their holiday invite with a 60-56 loss to Plainfield East.

Willowbrook's overall season record stood at 1-4 at the end of the invite.

The Warriors opened their 2023-24 season with a loss at Libertyville on Nov. 13.

The Warriors hung with Montini through the first half of last week's game in Villa Park.

The Broncos led Willowbrook 18-13 after one quarter and 31-25 at halftime. Montini outscored the

Warriors 18-5 in the third quarter to extend its lead to 49-30.

Senior Elle Bruschuk scored 11 points and grabbed 10 rebounds for Willowbrook during last week's loss to Montini. Junior Ayaani Gusman, who made a pair of 3-point shots in the first quarter, added nine points for the Warriors.

Montini won the title at Willowbrook's Thanksgiving invite with a perfect 4-0 record.

Willowbrook held a 13-12 lead over Plainfield East through one quarter of last week's contest. The Warriors led the Bengals 26-25 at halftime.

Plainfield East owned a 44-41 lead at the end of the third quarter.

A basket by Willowbrook senior Lillian Vish tied the game at 49-49 with 4:15 to play. The Bengals then scored seven unanswered points to take a 56-49 lead.

Senior Tia Kelly scored a team-leading 12 points for the Warriors in last week's loss to Plainfield East.

Vish and junior Loralai McIntyre scored 10 points each. Bruschuk scored eight points and pulled down 18 rebounds. Junior Kendall Medinger, who made a pair of 3-point shots, contributed eight points. Gusman provided five points.

Bruschuk and Gusman were both named to the event's All-Tournament Team.

Bruschuk was named to the All-Tournament First Team, while Gusman received All-Tournament Second Team recognition.

Willowbrook's season continues with this week's West Suburban Gold Conference home games against Hinsdale South and Addison Trail.



CHRIS FOX PHOTOS Rock Valley Publishing

Willowbrook's girls basketball team finished its five-team round-robin Thanksgiving invite last week. The Warriors completed the invite with a 60-32 loss to Montini Catholic on Nov. 20, followed by a 60-56 loss to Plainfield East one night later. Willowbrook won one of four games and finished fourth in its invite. The Warriors began the event with a loss to Lockport on Nov. 16. Willowbrook earned its one win of the invite when it defeated Morgan Park on Nov. 17. The Warriors—senior Elle Bruschuk and junior Ayaani Gusman—were named to the invite's All-Tournament Team. Bruschuk (No. 33 - above left) and Gusman (No. 10 - above right) are pictured with their medals at the end of the event. One photo from the game against Plainfield East shows senior Lillian Vish (No. 22 - below right) driving for a basket that tied the score at 49-49 with 4:15 left in the fourth quarter. Plainfield East then scored seven straight points to take a 56-49 lead. One more photo (below left) from the Warriors' contest against the Bengals shows senior Tia Kelly at the free-throw line. Kelly scored team-leading 12 points in the game.



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SUBMITTED PHOTO Rock Valley Publishing

Perry receives 88's Best award for October

Willowbrook High School senior Alexander Perry is his school's recipient of the 88's Best award for the month of October. Perry, who is a resident of Lombard, was recognized during the District 88 Board of Education's Oct. 30 meeting. He is pictured (right) at that meeting with Willowbrook Principal Dan Krause (left). The 88's Best award recognizes students for their achievements in and out of the classroom. The award recognizes nine Willowbrook students and nine Addison Trail students each school year. Krause read comments from some of Perry's teachers during the Oct. 30 board meeting. Those teachers described Perry as an academically gifted and hard-working student who is very helpful and caring. Perry is an inductee of several honor societies, including the National Honor Society, the National English Honor Society, the Math Honor Society and Willowbrook's social studies honor society—Civitas. He is an Illinois State Scholar, and he has been named to Willowbrook's Distinction Honor Roll each semester of his high school career. Perry is a four-year member of the school's math team. He's also a member of Willowbrook's boys cross-country team. Perry is considering which school he will attend after he graduates from Willowbrook. He is planning to pursue a career in business.

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Girls Volleyball Player of the Year: Calli Kenny carried Willowbrook to new heights, third in the state

Marquette recruit finished record-setting career with program's first state appearance

By Joshua Welge

 Expand

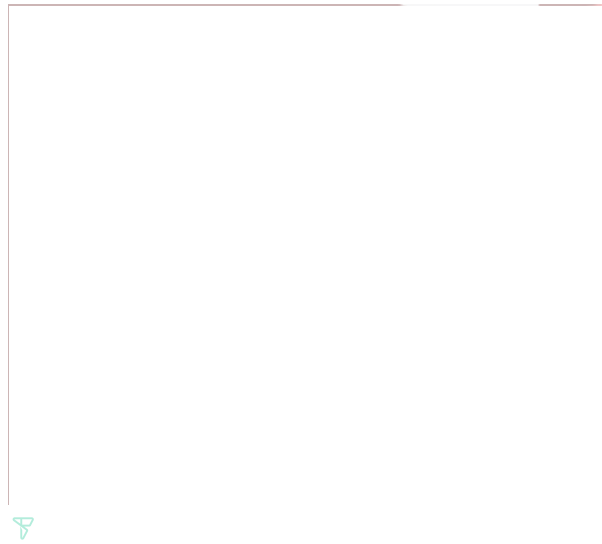


Willowbrook's Calli Kenny makes a pass against Benet Academy in the 4A state semifinal Friday, Nov. 10, 2023 at CEFCU Arena in Normal. (Alex T. Paschal)

November 30, 2023 at 5:47 pm CST

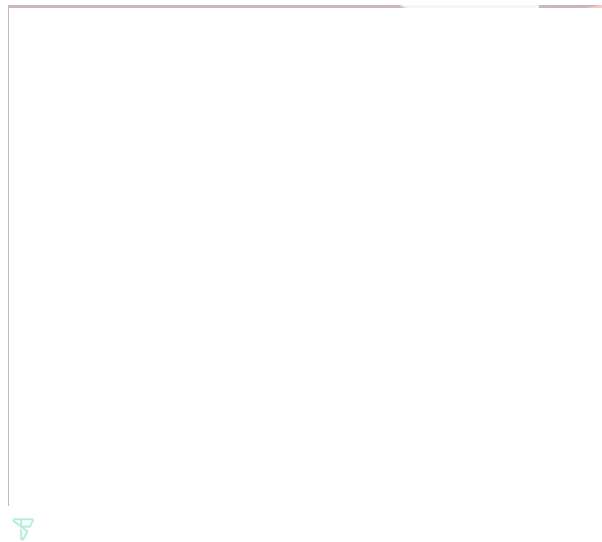
Irene Mason's first exposure to Calli Kenny, ironically, was not in a volleyball setting.

Willowbrook's volleyball coach was familiar with her future star going back to when Kenny was 8 years old coming to basketball camps at the high school.



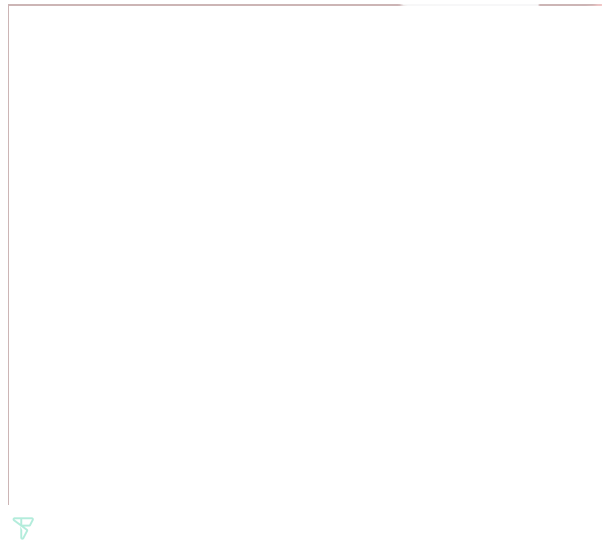
Mason knew the type of athlete Kenny, daughter of former Willowbrook three-sport star Andrea Miller, was. So one can imagine Mason's excitement when she learned from former college teammates that coached Kenny in the Lions Juniors club that Kenny's favorite sport had become volleyball.

"Both girls [Calli and her sister Hannah], their favorite sport used to be basketball," Mason said. "I heard about the switch and any coach would be super excited to get their hands on them and find out what they're really about. Calli didn't disappoint."



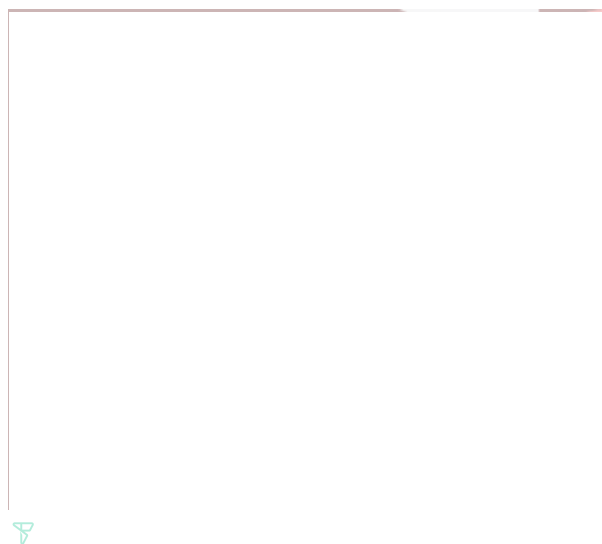
She most certainly didn't.

The two sisters led Willowbrook to its first sectional title in 2021, and followed that up with a 36-win sectional final appearance Kenny's junior year.



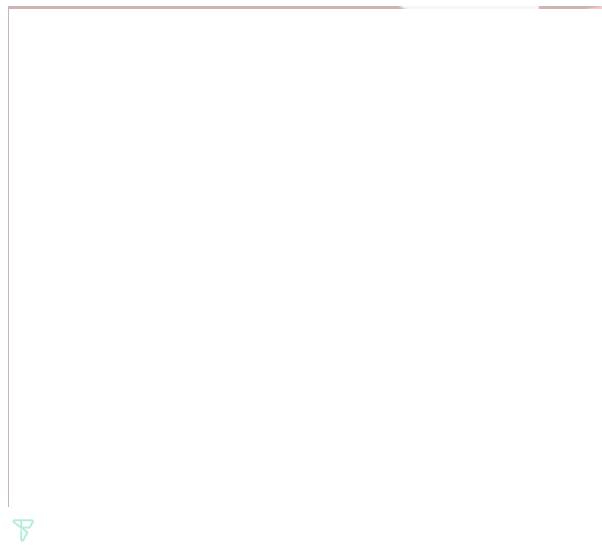
She saved the best for last this fall.

With Kenny, a Marquette recruit, and her sister, a Louisville commit, leading the way, Willowbrook went 40-2, won its fourth conference championship, third regional title and second sectional championship. Topping it all off, the Warriors advanced to the state tournament for the first time in program history, finishing third in Class 4A.



It was a banner achievement for the program, school and Willowbrook community that was not lost on Kenny. Rewarding their support meant the world.

“I think it was even more special just because of how, coming in freshman year, the reputation that Willowbrook volleyball had,” Kenny said. “Starting from that year with coach Mason, who always believed in me and especially our team, coming up short the last few years but being super successful I knew we could take the next step. It being our senior year, the community coming together and our parents after a couple playoff games, we thought oh my gosh we have to do it for our parents. We knew how much it would mean for our coaches, parents, the community. Everybody being a part of it made it more fun.”



Kenny had 318 kills, 104 aces, 399 assists and 234 digs her senior year running a a 6-2 as a setter/right-side hitter. She holds the school record for kills in a single season (321), aces in a single season (104), kills in a career (1,003), and aces in a career (262), and reached the 1,000 career kill milestone in her final match of the season. She had 17 kills and 15 assists in her final match, a three-set win over Barrington in the Class 4A third-place match.

Those statistics, and the history Kenny made at Willowbrook, make her the choice as the Suburban Life girls volleyball Player of the Year.



Kenny made it her mission for this Willowbrook team to be the “GOAT,” or greatest of all time at the school. She threw that statement out there after an early-season match at Lyons Township, a match in which Kenny had a stunning 12 kills in the third set to lead the Warriors past the Lions for the first time ever. Not even a three-set sectional final with Oak Park-River Forest, which handed Willowbrook its lone regular-season loss, would get in Kenny’s way.

“When she wants something and puts her mind to it, if there is a will to do it, it will get done,” Mason said. “I remember using it as motivation before the Lyons match telling her specifically we had never beaten them. She looked at me and nodded. That is the kind of player she is. She loves those big moments more where she has something to prove.”





Willowbrook's Calli Kenny goes up for a shot against Benet Academy in the 4A state semifinal Friday, Nov. 10, 2023 at CEFCU Arena in Normal. (Alex T. Paschal)

Kenny is proof that success on the volleyball court goes beyond the measurables of height or size.

She stands 5-foot-9, relatively short for a future Division I setter and a right-side hitter. But her explosive athletic ability and drive more than make up for what Kenny may lack in inches.



“Her athleticism and her strength really help set her apart,” Mason said. “When you see her in person and realize she’s 5-foot-9, when she’s out on the court and doing things she’s doing, she makes it seamless against hitters and blockers 6-foot plus night after night. It doesn’t faze her. Calli is the old expression, it’s not the size of the dog in the fight, it’s the size of the fight in the dog. She really brings it. Her athleticism and ball control and skill set is so high, she doesn’t miss a beat.”

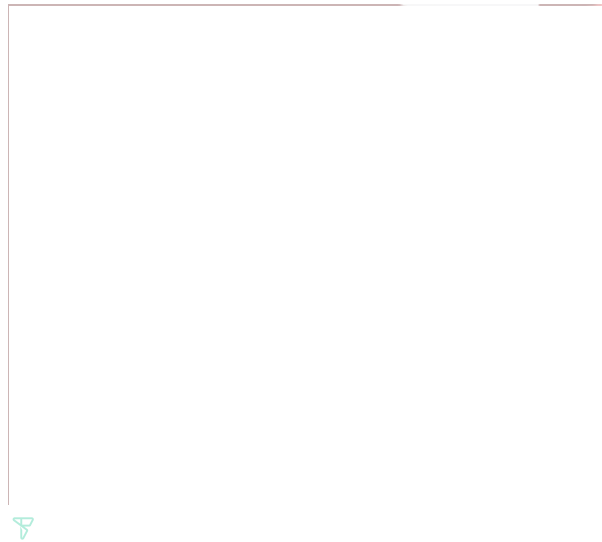
Kenny was one of Willowbrook’s better basketball players in two years playing the sport in high school, and could also play softball. But volleyball stuck.



Kenny provided a glimpse of what was to come during the spring 2020 COVID season that was limited to 12 matches. Sophomore year, her skill set allowed

Kenny to play out of position at outside hitter, and lead Willowbrook in kills, and multiple statistical categories.

As a junior she returned to her comfort zone, at setter and right-side hitter.



“She is the full package is what she is, wherever she is on the court,” Mason said. “If she’s in the back row she can be a passer that other teams will avoid serving to. Serving, don’t want to take away from that, I think she had 104 aces this season And she gets touches when she is blocking. She is the total package. Marquette knows that and sees that.”

Kenny looks forward to the challenge at the next level. She’ll be playing club until the end of April, and from there do individual training before leaving for Marquette in July.



She leaves behind little regret from her last season at Willowbrook.

“Every other year I cried after our last game. Besides happy tears I had nothing to be sad about this season,” Kenny said. “It was such a good way to go out. It was so awesome to get the community and school together like that. I had teachers come up to me and tell me thanks for bringing school spirit back to Willowbrook.”

Girls Volleyball



Joshua Welge

I am the Sports Editor for Kendall County Newspapers, the Kane County Chronicle and Suburban Life Media, covering primarily sports in Kendall, Kane, DuPage and western Cook counties. I've been covering high school sports for 24 years. I also assist with our news coverage.



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