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# Shayla Rautenberg makes Milford's Class A win one a packed gym won't forget

**Julianna Schwindt**
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Future Husker Shayla Rautenberg poses for a portrait at Milford High School. The sophomore recently committed to Nebraska and is rated as the No. 3 player nationally in the 2028 class.
ARTHUR H. TRICKETT-WILE, Journal Star

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Julianna Schwindt

MILFORD, Neb. — Shayla Rautenberg was the first to touch the volleyball, digging it to her setter.

In the split-second between the set and ball returning to her, she ran to the net, looked across the court for an open spot and lined it up.

With a smack, the Husker commit slammed the ball dead-center on Omaha Westside's side. Not a single opponent came close to getting a hand on it.

That was the tone-setting final kill in the first set of an eventual 25-20, 25-12, 16-25, 25-22 win over the Warriors.

This was the first time Class C-1 Milford played a Class A team in the eight seasons Emily Restau has coached the Eagles.


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"With Class A teams, it's just a little bit quicker tempo, and you have a little bit more depth," Restau said. "It's just gonna take us to that next level of competitiveness with teams."

Rautenberg is no stranger to top competition.

The 6-foot-3 junior missed the start of the season to play for the United States Junior national team in an international tournament. That's meant some adjustment as the season progressed, particularly with the Eagles' primary setter graduating last season.

Junior Braelynn Muller (15 assists) and freshman Adi Upton (eight) set in a 6-2 rotation Thursday night.

"I was the most nervous I've ever been for a game this year because I was like, I don't know what it's gonna be like, but it was really fun," Muller said. "It's really nice to have Shayla and just knowing you can always throw the ball up to her and she'll probably end up doing something with it."

Rautenberg (32 kills, six blocks) said there were some similarities between playing Westside and for Team USA. It started with the pace of the match against the Warriors — Class A state qualifiers last season. Playing Class A teams also means facing some of the top players in the state, playing for Team USA, she encountered some of the top players in the world.

"I think our block got faster as the game went on," Rautenberg said. "We were running faster-paced balls. In the beginning, we were running a pretty slow pace, because that's just what we're used to. So just everything I would say had to get a little bit faster."

Rautenberg used her national team experience to help keep Milford — ranked fourth in C-1 — grounded against Westside.

"Just being kind of a leader on the team. Like if someone makes a mistake, it's fine," Rautenberg said. "One of the things our coaches say is, 'Fix your face.' So if your teammates can see that you're down and you're not focused or into it, then they're not going to be focused or into it, too. So just all coming together as a team to work together and stay positive, stay connected."

Despite her success and status, she said she's still happiest playing for a small-town school.

“We were watching film for this game, and (the other team) had like, maybe 10 students in the student section. Their stands were nowhere near filled,” Rautenberg said. “In C-1, everybody here knows everybody. It's a really tight-knit community. So I don't think I would change that for what we have here.”

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**Photos: Milford Eagles face Freeman Falcons on the road for prep volleyball**



Milford's Braelynn Mueller (13) and Emery Newton (1) leap for a block agains Freeman's Adison Otto (14) on Tuesday, Sept. 1, 2026, at Freeman High School in Adams. Milford beat Freeman 3-1.

ARTHUR H. TRICKETT-WILE,Journal Star

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