Volleyball to build on playoff experience

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The absence of Gardner, who led MIT this year in kill percentage, hurt the team, although Altman credited Athena Cozakos '89 with strong play in Gardner's place.

"It was great to see [Cozakos] have a career-ending match with excellent hitting," Altman said.

Cozakos, who lives in Encinitas, CA, and had a few hometown fans at the Pomona match, is one of three graduating seniors. Teri Lowenstein and setter Karen Koyama are the other two.

Lowenstein and junior Cecilia Wapinski were named to the New England Women's Volleyball Association's first all-star team, while Cozakos was named to the second team.

Lowenstein, who also plays softball and basketball, has been a defensive stalwart for the team over the four years she has played.

"She's done a great job for us all year," Altman said, citing Lowenstein's digging and passing skills, as well as her accurate hitting despite not being called on often in offense.

All three seniors pointed to the opportunity to play on a national level as highlights of their years with MIT volleyball. MIT has been to the national tournament four times in this decade, including 1986.

Despite the departure of the seniors, the Engineers have a lot to look forward to next year.

Three freshmen - Gardner, middle hitter Cindy Parrish, and Nyla Hendrick - started and will return next year with tournament experience. They will join this year's "solid group of juniors," according to Altman, which includes setter Jenny Harris, middle hitter Debbie Nungester, Wapinski, and Tami Jacobsen.

At the West Regional, "We realized that we were a national caliber team," Koyama said.

This sets a lofty goal, if yet unwritten, for next year's team.