WOMEN'S JC VOLLEYBALL

Cabrillo bounced at state

"Hawks already eyeing 2011 title

By ZACH STOLOFF

RANCHO CUCAMONGA — Cabrillo College women's volleyball squad ended a superb season on a sour note. Despite a powerhouse season and a No. 1 state ranking, the Seahawks went two-and-out in the California Community College Athletic Association state championship tournament at Chaffey College on Saturday.

After barreling through the rest of its Northern California competition to earn the top NorCal seed, Cabrillo faced the No. 2 team in Southern California, Los Angeles Pierce (28-2), to open the tournament. Despite jumping out to big leads in each of the first two games, the Seahawks were swept out of the match 26-24, 25-21, 25-23.

The loss forced the Seahawks into a second match on the day in the double elimination tournament. Unfortunately for Cabrillo, the squad was not able to change its fortunes while facing Santa Rosa (27-4), the No. 2 NorCal team, in the losers bracket. It was swept for a second straight time, 25-21, 25-20, 25-19.

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In contrast to the day's first match, the Seahawks (28-3) at times seemed to be lacking the energy of the Bear Cubs. "We just needed to play the best volleyball of our lives, and it just didn't happen," said Cabrillo coach Gabby Houston. "You can't just come in and play volleyball, you have to make changes, adjust to what your opponent is doing, and we just didn't do that as smoothly as I would have liked."

Though the Seahawks have little to show for their six-hour bus ride south, the team did take several positives from the trip. One was the camaraderie of the team and exhilaration of the competition. "I think it was a great season, we really came together as a team," said freshman libero Michelle Meyer, a 2005 Harbor High graduate who had 19 digs against Santa Rosa. "It's kind of a disappointing finish, but we gave it our all. It's the first time Cabrillo has made a final four since 1997, so we definitely did our school proud."

In addition, a largely freshman starting lineup gained some valuable experience while competing at the highest level. For Houston, the bar for 2011 has only been raised by the Seahawks' Final Four appearance this year.

"I think this is a good building experience," Houston said. "Those returning players, they're going to understand what it's going to take to win a match when you're at the state tournament. It's a state of mind."

Among those returning, freshman Summer Mitchell reflected on the Seahawks' season-long ethos, invoking Cabrillo's sense of team even after the season's shocking end.

"Our phrase this season is 'I love team,' and I do, I love my team," said Mitchell, who had 19 kills between the two matches. "I think working up to this point was a great accomplishment, and I'm really happy I've met all these people."