



WATSONVILLE FLY-IN & AIR SHOW | EXTRA, B1

FLYING FAMILY

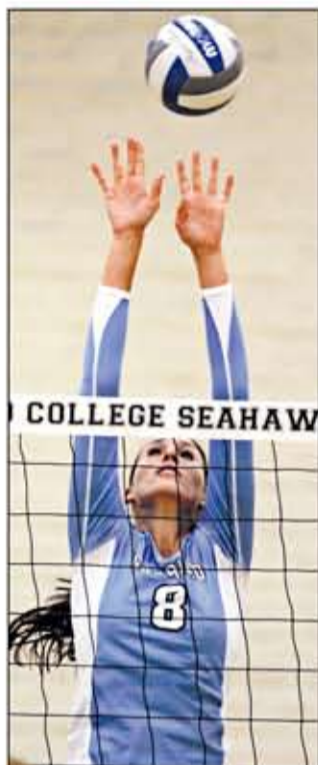
PILOT'S PLANE HAS CONNECTION TO HIS DAD



WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL | SPORTS, C1

CABRILLO STARTS SEASON WITH WIN

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL



BILL LOVEJOY/SENTINEL
Alex DeRosa gets up to block a shot for Cabrillo in the Hawks' first tournament game Saturday.

Cabrillo on path to state tourney

Three-way wins a good start for Seahawks

By JULIE JAG

jjag@santacruzsentinel.com

APTOS — Just one day into its 2011 season, the Cabrillo College women's volleyball team already convinced at least one outsider the Seahawks could repeat last year's Cinderella run to the state championships.

And she's not just any outsider. Tracy Schulte is the coach of the Fresno City College team that is ranked No. 3 in Northern California — behind No. 2 Cabrillo and No. 1 Santa Rosa Junior College — by the California Community College Athletic Association.

And after her squad — perennial winner of the Central Valley Conference — lost to the Seahawks in straight

SEAHAWKS

Continued from C1

sets, 25-19, 25-19, 25-22, at the Cabrillo Classic Three-way on Saturday, Schulte couldn't hide her admiration.

"That's the best team I've faced in five years," said Schulte, who is in her fifth year coaching the Rams. "They pass well, hit well. There's not a lot of weaknesses."

The Seahawks can take reassurance from both the praise and the results of the tournament, in which they also overwhelmed a strong Sacramento City team 25-15, 25-13, 27-25 earlier in the day. But they may not have needed the ego boost. They've already set some pretty lofty goals.

"We want for sure to win our conference because we're the defending conference champions," Cabrillo third-year coach Gabby Houston said. "But, of course, the girls want to go to state again."

Just four of 11 players from the 2010 team that went 28-3, won the Coast Conference and made the school's fourth state appearance return this season. That means a lot of pressure is falling on the shoulders of seven players who had nothing to do with last season's run. Among them are local high school standouts Jordan Cotton [Aptos High], Alex DaRosa [Aptos] and Tori Bozzo [Salinas].

"It was like, 'Yeah, you guys are new, but guess what, you have a target on your back,'" Houston said. "But I knew we had good players coming in and I knew we could withstand that."

It also helps that the returning players made up the core of last year's uber-successful team. Sierra Clark, a 6-foot-3 sophomore middle out of San Lorenzo Valley High, keyed the Seahawks' rise to a No. 1 state ranking — a first for Cabrillo — before injuring her knee midway through

the 2010 season. Clark led the Seahawks in kills Saturday with 19 between the two matches. Summer Mitchell also returns in the middle and contributed a combined 16 kills, and returning setter Brooke Carroll, also out of SLV, made 63 total assists. Alekxis Mondragon of Watsonville rounds out the list, though Harbor graduate Michelle Meyer could technically be considered the team's fifth returnee. The libero from the 2010 squad came back to help the Seahawks from the assistant coach's chair.

"I think our team is better than last year. I think we have a lot of skills," Mitchell said. "It's going to be a fun year for sure, if we can put it all together."

Cabrillo is the heavy favorite to repeat as the Coast Conference champion, but plenty of teams stand in the way of the Seahawks taking a second NorCal title. Chief among them is Santa Rosa, which rose to No. 1 in the most recent CCCAA NorCal poll because it finished second to champion Los Angeles Pierce College at the four-team state tournament in December while Cabrillo took fourth. Delta College and American River could also throw a roadblock into the Seahawks' NorCal title plans.

Houston said she is trying to focus her players' attention to more immediate tasks than state. But it hasn't been easy, especially since their unsettling performance there last year is one of the Seahawks' prime motivators.

"We're trying not to look that far ahead," Houston said. "Last year, the girls felt like they blew it. They felt like they were robbed last year. They didn't play their best."

So, this year, even just getting to state might not be enough. The Seahawks surely wouldn't mind becoming the first team in tournament history to bring the state title north.

"I think everyone is here to play volleyball, not that we weren't before, and everyone is very determined to do better than last year," Mitchell said.

'It was like, 'Yeah, you guys are new, but guess what, you have a target on your back.' But I knew we had good players coming in and I knew we could withstand that.'

GABBY HOUSTON, Cabrillo coach



BILL LOVEJOY/SENTINEL
Tori Bozzo takes a shot at the Sac City defense for Cabrillo in tournament play Saturday.