Cabrillo advances to State for third time in four years

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APTOS — When Cabrillo College Seahawks head coach Gabrielle Houston-Neville assembled this year’s squad she knew that they had the opportunity to do something special.

This team, which Houston-Neville said is the most talented she’s ever had, has not disappointed.

The Cabrillo College Seahawks rolled past the San Joaquin Delta College Mustangs 25-16, 25-18, 25-23 Tuesday night at Cabrillo College to earn their third California Community College Athletic Association State Championship berth in four years.

“At the beginning of the season when I looked at the talent and who was coming in, it was one of the goals,” Houston-Neville said of reaching the state championships. “So yeah, we were going for it from the beginning.”

The No. 1 seed in the CCCAA NorCal playoffs Seahawks (28-0) didn’t skip a beat against the No. 4 seeded Mustangs (21-5).

After Cabrillo made their way through the first two games easily to go up 2-0, Delta started off fast by jumping out to an 8-1 lead on the No. 1 ranked team in the state in Game 3.

“I was really surprised at how we started out the first two games,” said freshman middle blocker Madison Borch, who had seven kills and seven blocks. “We started out really strong and got a big lead.”

But the seven-time Coast Conference Champions Cabrillo, powered by stonewall blocking from Borch and Co., fought back to steal the lead away late.

“When they got ahead of us we just had to keep fighting,” Borch said. “We knew they were serious about it, but we fought back. We played really well.”

Delta did have a chance to come back after star player Lauren Kissel hammered one of her 12 kills past the Cabrillo defense, but a timeout from Houston-Neville ended up icing the server and her serve was too long, allowing the Hawks to advance in three games.

“Just super excited to be there,” Houston-Neville said. “We’ve been working all year to get to this point. This is why we’ve been playing so hard all year, to get to the State championship.”

Cabrillo will play Grossmont College (28-3), who beat Golden West in five games to advance to State, Saturday at 2 p.m. at Foothill College in Los Altos.

“I’m nervous,” Borch said. “To be honest, I was so nervous, but that just made me play harder. So even if I am nervous I hope that it has the same effect on me. I’m definitely nervous, but I’m excited though. I have butterflies.”

Kelsey Shaver led Seahawks with 17 kills and 10 digs. Bria Morgan added 12 kills, and Tyler Gasolaga served up 36 assists.

Kissel, a transfer from Division-I volleyball program California State University Fullerton, added four blocks and 13 digs to her impressive day. Mustangs head coach Molly Mordlaunt said her sophomore outside hitter is nulling over which D-I program to go to next season, but has yet to make up her mind.

Coryn Hernandez finished up with three kills and seven rejections for the Mustangs and Jackie Ahloos chimed in with six kills, two blocks and five digs.

“We probably didn’t play our best volleyball,” Mordlaunt said, “but that is not to take anything away from Cabrillo, they are a wonderful and really well-coached team.”