WOMEN’S NORCAL VOLLEYBALL PLAYOFFS

Seahawks move closer to state

Top-ranked Cabrillo ousts Sierra for 21st straight sweep, advances to NorCal finals

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APTOS » When is the Cabrillo College women’s volleyball team going to finally be tested? The No. 1 state-ranked Seahawks swear they were Saturday night, when they swept No. 9 Sierra 25-18, 25-15, 25-16 in the second round of the NorCal Regional playoffs.

Not completely tested, but enough to make them happy. “For the first time, people were digging us,” said Alex Flores, an outside hitter for the defending state-champion Seahawks. “To have the competition is incredibly fun. Other than playing ourselves at practice, we don’t get that often.”

The Seahawks move to 29-0 on the season and extend their winning streak to 60 matches. They’ve swept their opponents the past 21 matches and have also accomplished that feat in 26 of 29 matches this season.

With the win, the Seahawks advance to the third round of NorCal — one win away from returning to the state tournament. They play again Tuesday at home.

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The Score

CABRILLO 3, SIERRA 0
25-18, 25-15, 25-16
Up Next: No. 4 San Joaquin Delta-No. 5 Foothill winner at No. 1 Cabrillo
When: Tuesday, 7 p.m.

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— Alex Flores, Cabrillo volleyball

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against either No. 5 Foothill (22-5) of Los Altos Hills.

Cabrillo will also be hosting the state tournament this year. To prep for the event, school officials pulled out both sides of the bleachers for the first time in more than 25 years, athletic director Dale Murray said.

A large, pro-Seahawks crowd turned out to fill the stands and cheer on their favorite opponents, who made the long trek from Rocklin only to be ousted from the playoffs in an hour.

Even with the loss, the young Wolverines (12-13) — who start just one sophomore in Morgen Pomeroy and took third place in the Big 8 Conference — held their heads high.

Wolverines coach Vera Nelson provided some motivation fodder to boot. “If we had an offense, we would have beat them,” Nelson said. “They’re going to have to put their best foot forward if they want to win state again. We dug them. We just don’t have the firepower this year. They’re a great team, but we dug them.”

Seahawks coach Gabby Houston-Neville said her team does need to improve its passing and finishing as the opponents will only get tougher, but added, “We were still able to put the ball away. But that was a definitely a test (on offense), for sure.”

Sophomore Kelsey Shaver, a Harbor High alum who was recently named Coast Conference North Division MVP, All-NorCal and AVCA All-American, finished with 14 kills, 12 digs and three aces to lead the Seahawks.

“We were setting Shaver a lot because we were struggling in passing on serve receive,” Houston-Neville said.

Madison Borch, a 5-foot-11 sophomore middle, had eight kills and three blocks and 5-10 outside hitter Flores had five kills.

The height of Borch, Flores and 6-foot middle Patrice Williams, a freshman out of Harbor, led to the Wolverines trying to overhit on occasion and produced several hitting errors. “We’ve never seen a block that big,” said Kayla Geary, a freshman right-side hitter for the Wolverines. “But no matter how tall they are, you’ve got to keep swinging. The stats and the records don’t mean anything. It’s drive, heart and passion that matters. We’ll get them next year.”

Outside hitter Megan Richwine led the Wolverines with 11 kills and nine digs. Freshman libero Sarah Shively added 22 digs and freshman outside hitter Brittany Boestra had five blocks.

Grace Ryan had 15 digs for the Seahawks.

Cabrillo started slowly in all three games, but pulled away in each.

Seahawks sophomore setter Tyler Gasologa finished with 32 assists and eight digs. She also had a handful of kills on quick sets.

Both Games 2 and 3 ended on hitting errors by the Wolverines. “That team had great defense,” Shaver said. “We hadn’t played them before, so we didn’t know what to expect. They’re defense was awesome. We hadn’t seen competition like that in a long time.”

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