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State Champions! Campolindo Volleyball Takes the Title

By Alex Crook



Photo Doug Kohen

After countless hours of practice, patience and determination, the Campolindo girls' volleyball team finally got what they rightfully deserved, the Division III state championship. The Cougars took down defending champion Cathedral Catholic, from San Diego, three sets to two on Saturday, December 4. Cathedral Catholic has played in the State Championship the last three years but Campo came prepared with a game plan that didn't need much alteration. Head coach Scott Bishop said, "Other than changing serving targets, we stuck to our game plan. We scouted them extensively."

Both teams came to play in the most important match of the year, and Campo had been preparing for handling the pressure all season. Bishop said: "From day one we teach that "Pressure is a Privilege and Champions Take Risks." We seek out pressure knowing that it has the opportunity to teach and grow. We try to distance our focus on rewarding the win and only praise them for stepping up to meet that that challenge."

Campo captured the momentum in the first set of the match. Both teams exchanged a one point lead early in the opening set, until four straight points for the Cougars gave them the edge in the first game.

Cathedral Catholic senior hitter and captain Taylor Milton led a comeback, and the Dons tied the score at 23.

Again, the one point lead went back and forth, but Campolindo held on to edge out the win in nail-biting fashion, 27-25.

The second set went almost identical to the first, with the designated host Cougars starting strong, and Cathedral Catholic fighting to get back into it. Late in the set, Campolindo rattled off three consecutive points, including a block by Cougar senior middle blocker Chandler Moore, tying the score at 20 and forcing Cathedral to call time. But Campo held on to win 25-23 in the second set.

Campo fans started to believe that it would be possible to win their first state championship since 2006. On the other side of the court, Cathedral Catholic had other plans.

In set three, it was the Dons' turn to control the pace and Cathedral Catholic found their rhythm, with Milton leading the way. Despite three straight hits landing out of bounds, the Dons powered their way to a 25-21 set victory to force a fourth set.

In set four, things would again go Cathedral's way, as the Dons led the entire set to more comfortably force a fifth and final set, 25-18 and tie the score at two sets apiece.

The fifth set was hard fought and again the teams traded points early. The final point was won off a long rally which ended with Cathedral Catholic's error.

"I am very pleased to have had the opportunity to see them win in this manner. It made the victory so sweet," Bishop said.

Senior Campo hitter Mary Vaccaro was named Finals Most Valuable Player for her outstanding contribution to Campo's championship win; she recorded a double-double with 20 kills, 17 digs.

Vaccaro pointed to team effort as key to the team's success: "This season has been the greatest team experience for me, and I have never been on a team where everyone cares about each other so much. This season and state title were a total team effort, and that is what allowed us to beat teams throughout the season that looked better on paper, and to win the state title beating the best team we have faced all year. We have great individual players, but the best part about us is that we come together as a team more so than any other teams that center around one or two star players."

Vaccaro will play for West Point next year.

The Campolindo girls' volleyball team has a slogan of "Si Se Puede." The popular translation from Spanish is, "Yes we can." All season long, these Cougars never took their eyes off the prize and, in the end, their determination rewarded them with a state title.



Left to right: Coach Scott Bishop, Anisa Smith, Mallory Loomis, Mary Vaccaro, Abbie Noland, Annie Shurtz, Chandler Moore, Brooke Standing, Lena Olufson, Sophie Seiberth, front row: Kit Koelzer, Sophie Smith, Stacy Drury, Cassidy Abel, Kim Condie Photo Doug Kohen



Chandler Moore (#4) Photo Doug Kohen

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