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Campolindo Volleyball Wins NCS

By Marissa Harnett



Senior Annie Shurtz goes up for the game-winning hit in the fifth set of the NCS championship match. Photo Andy Scheck

straight points, evening the score. The teams battled back and forth until senior Rachel Hua stepped up to serve, earning another five points. At game point, O'Dowd's communication broke down. The ball dropped giving Campo the game.

Game two mirrored the first, with a slow start for the Cougars. Junior Natalie Meniktas turned it around with her low, flat serve. Campo earned nine consecutive points to take the lead. Hua served to finish the game, winning eight straight.

Games three and four began similarly with close exchange of points. But mid-way through each game, O'Dowd gained traction and erased Campo's momentum, winning 25-20 and 25-21 to force a fifth game.

Although losing control of the match in the third and fourth games, Campo was not overwhelmed. "We practiced being behind and fighting to catch-up with (the) other team. It was not a surprise with our players," Vuong said.

The team increased their intensity for the deciding game. The Cougars took control from the start and held onto the lead. Shurtz, who Vuong described as "the team backbone," came up with four of her 22 kills in this crucial game.

At 14-8, match point, Campo thought they had won, and were surprised when the ball sailed back over the net. One more point, however, cinched the win, 15-9.

Vuong stressed focus and poise as the major reasons for their success. He also added that serving was important. "Our serving was excellent. It was the key (to) our victory," he said.

Also key was the outstanding overall team effort, led by strong performances from Shurtz, who added three blocks to her 22 kills, sophomore Kelley Wirth, who had 10 kills and eight blocks, and senior Sophie Seiberth who had 39 assists.

Campolindo advanced to the State playoffs as the top seed in CIF State Girls Division III, northern California bracket, and played Shasta High School last night, Nov. 20 (after press deadline). Check our website for update information, www.lamorindaweekly.com. If the Cougars beat Shasta, they will play the next round at home Nov. 24 at 7 p.m.

Acalanes also played in the NCS tournament falling to Sir Francis Drake in round one, 25-16, 25-9, 22-25, 25-16.

Assistant coach Jessica Mall was proud of how well her team played.

"Overall it was a good match. Many girls had what I thought was their best match. Although our opponent was tough the girls battled it out," she said. "We have had a great season."

It took more than two grueling hours and five sets, but the No. 1 seeded Campolindo volleyball team overcame Oakland rival No. 2 Bishop O'Dowd to win the NCS Championship. Saturday's match-up marked the second time Campolindo (27-4) has won the title in three years.

Amid the thunderous roar of competing fans, the Cougars came out aggressively, earning two early wins, 25-18 and 25-13.

In the first game, O'Dowd (29-7) captured the coveted early points and a mental edge as Campo senior powerhouse Annie Shurtz's kill attempts were foiled by the Dragons.

Campo head coach John Vuong remarked on the importance of the mental game. "Volleyball is 80 percent mental. You could be a great hitter or passer, but when you let your opponent get into your head, it is hard to focus and be productive," Vuong added, "We have to be poised throughout the game regardless (of) what the outcomes are."

O'Dowd's momentum continued until Campo's first time-out at 5-10. Campo regained their composure and took control after the timeout.

Sophomore Maddie Browning served to win five



Photo Andy Scheck

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[back](#)

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