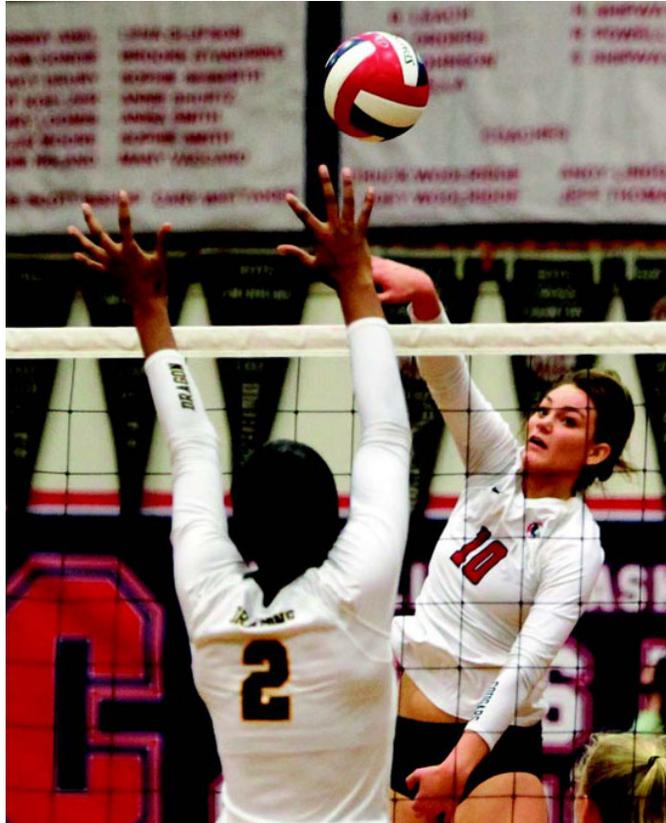


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Campo Girls Volleyball Lose NCS Final, Make Strong CIF Run

By Emily Dugdale



Kristen Sibley Photos Gint Federas

Despite a thrilling third set comeback, the Campolindo Cougars (12-0, 25-12) fell to Bishop O'Dowd (8-0, 26-12) 3-0 in the NCS championship match Saturday Nov. 21.

The Lady Cougars - who were also runners-up in last year's NCS champions - couldn't make up for a game characterized by unforced errors. Despite key players putting up big numbers - junior Jaime Brown had 16 assists and 10 digs, Kristen Sibley nailed 10 kills and 11 digs and junior Sabrina Smith had 8 kills - the team couldn't recover after two shaky sets.

The Dragons ultimately clinched the title after battling out the final few points in an intense third set (18-25, 19-25, 24-26).

The championship was the first time that Campo and Bishop O'Dowd had met this season, and the crowd loved it: parents joined the students in standing on the bleachers and cheering till the final point. In the rousing semifinals on Nov. 18, the Lady Cougars defeated rival Acalanes in three straight sets (18-25, 22-25, 14-25).

John Vuong, Campo head coach, called the NCS championship loss "disappointing."

"O'Dowd came out to play, and they did,"

Vuong said as the crowd spilled onto the court after

the final set point. "If we had taken out all of our unforced errors, I think the outcome of the game would have been different," he added before joining his tearful team to accept their runner-up award.

The team finished with 27 team kills, 11 blocks, 31 digs and 27 assists.

By finishing in the top two in NCS the Lady Cougars earned a berth in the CIF State Tournament - the Cougars were the only Lamorinda team to earn a berth in this year's inaugural tournament.

When speaking of his team's preparation before their first state match, Vuong made his goal clear. "We need to refocus," he said. "We need to continue to work on our technical skills and minimize our unforced errors."

Vuong added that the teams Campo would meet at state are "all pretty good."

"We have to play our best game every night," he said.

The Lady Cougars entered the tournament as the fourth seed. They kicked off the tournament on Nov. 24 with a win against Christian Brothers in a score of 3-1 (25-18, 20-25, 25-21, 25-19).

"We knew playing CB was not going to be easy," said Vuong after their victory. The Lady Cougars barely beat the Falcons at the Super 8 tournament earlier this year. "They are fast in the back and played great defense," he said.

Despite a tough opponent, Campo cruised to victory in their first state match. "We maintained our focus throughout the matches and (were) not worried what the scores said. Our serves were tough and threw them out of systems throughout the night," said Vuong.

The Lady Cougars fell to No. 1 seed Valley Christian on Nov. 28 (25-16, 25-17, 25-20) in the NorCal semifinals.



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