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Campo reaches semifinals of NorCal regional volleyball tournament

By Karl Buscheck



Photo Gint Federas

The Campolindo boys volleyball team advanced all the way to the CIF NorCal Division II regional semifinals before their season came to an end in a 3-2 loss to No. 4 seed Saratoga on May 25 in Moraga.

For the Cougars, the defeat also brought an end to the team's 15-match win streak, leaving the group with a final record of 31-4 overall and 11-0 in DAL play. Head coach Dave Chen knew just the type of challenge the No. 1 seed Cougars were in for in the NorCal championships, which pits the top programs from around the region against each other.

"The teams in the other sections have been battle tested through their own regular season and section playoff runs," Chen explained. "They all pose matchup challenges as each team has several top-caliber players that have helped to bring them to this point."

Campolindo had reached the NorCal semifinals after blitzing the No. 8 seed Rio Americano, 3-0, in Round 1 at home on May 23.

The squad had earned the No. 1 seed in NorCals after charging through the regular season and NCS. The DAL Foothill conference winners also claimed the No. 1 seed in the NCS D II bracket on their way to securing the section title. The Cougars buzzed through the NCS competition, winning 3-0, 3-1 and 3-1.

"The one seed is always an honor to get," Chen said. "It's nice to be recognized and that your regular-season accomplishments garnered the top seed. However, regardless of the top seed or not, the playoffs are a totally different story. Every team seems to step up their game a few more notches to a new intensity (level) and focus. As the top seed, the intensity level teams brought against us was very high."

For the Cougars, who ended the spring as MaxPrep's No. 39 team in the state, a pair of senior leaders guided the group to the finals stages of the NorCal regional tournament.

Zack Duffy was named a captain for his ability to hold the team accountable on and off the court, while Gage Worsley impressed the coaching staff with his passionate yet light-hearted approach.

"We all know how dominant of a player he can be," Chen said of Worsley. "But for all of us behind the scenes, he has a way of communicating to all the players, new and old, and being relatable to convey his message."

While the Cougars played into the NorCals, Acalanes - the winners of the DAL Valley Conference - made it to the semifinals of the NCS D II tournament before bowing out of the postseason.

The Dons, who were seeded second in the competition, lost 3-2 to No. 3 seed Redwood (the team that would go on to lose to Campolindo in the finals) on May 16 in Lafayette.

Captained by the senior trio of Connor McCarthy, Bijan Shahabi and Carter Smith, the Dons arrived in the semifinals showdown after flying past No. 10 Drake, 3-0, on May 13 in their home gym in Lafayette. Acalanes ended the season with a 28-7 record overall and a 10-0 mark in DAL Valley Conference play.

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