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Orinda Bulldogs win the 2019 Middle School 8th Grade Girls Volleyball Championship

Submitted by Chivy Sok



From left: Sadie Symonds, Nicole Tuszynski, Hannah Rush, Keira Elliott, Hanna Bjornson, Lexie Tucker, Charlotta Bell, Eva Patrick, Karena Eberts, Tara Dao, Gabrielle Decareau, Makena Gong, Lexi Hens

The Bulldogs 8th Grade 8A Girls volleyball team of the Orinda Intermediate School has had an amazing season. They began their adventure with their first play against Foothill Middle School of Walnut Creek and won the game with a 25-15 and 25-19 record on Sept. 11. From this first game, the Bulldogs continued their winning streak against every single school with a 13-0 undefeated record.

OIS 8A Coach Kris Keller, who also directs the Vibe Volleyball Club, attributes the winning record to strong players all around.

"It truly has been a team effort throughout the season, with everyone stepping up at various times during different matches and sets to ensure each win," said Keller.

Setters Keira Elliott and Lexi Hens provided excellent team transfer from offense to defense.

Defense specialists/liberos Nicole Tuszynski and Makena Gong proved that no serve or hit was too tough to handle.

Outside Hitters Hanna Bjornson, Lexie Tucker, Gabrielle Decareau, and Tara Dao played both front court

and back court throughout every match showing their well-round play was unbeatable.

Middle blockers Eva Patrick and Karena Eberts improved throughout the year owning the skies above the net as well as the space behind them.

Opposite hitters Hannah Rush and Sadie Symonds showed their effectiveness from both the right side and serving.

Even the injured players, Charlotta Bell and Charlotte Mueller, who were not able to play, stayed with the team and provided team support.

Bulldogs concluded the season with an intense championship tournament from Oct. 15-18. They began the week with a successful game against Head Royce, winning both sets with a 25-11 during the first set and 25-5 during the second set. From this first match, OIS 8A advanced to play against Martinez Junior High. While Martinez worked hard to defeat OIS, the Bulldogs ultimately prevailed and advanced to the next match against host Standley Middle School.

The OIS versus Stanley play was an emotional game to watch. It was intensity taken to the next level. Stanley stepped into the match with determination and the two teams traded points closely throughout the game. But ultimately, Stanley won the first set with a 26-24 score. Bulldogs were equally determined to regain their position and fought hard to win the second set at 25-15. The game was ultimately decided on the third set where Bulldogs fell behind by 3 points, ending with a 15-12.

However, the double elimination process allowed OIS to advance in the bracket, ultimately meeting up with Stanley once more for the grand finale on Friday night.

Families and friends of both teams showed up in great number with signs and poms poms ready to cheer.

The Bulldogs knew they were up against a very strong team. But they had faith in their training and teammates and did not take any serve, dig, pass, or set for granted. The team worked together and ultimately prevailed and won the 2019 championship.

Nicole Tuzynski, Lexi Tucker, and Hanna Bjornson were honored with an award each for their strong play, with Bjornson being recognized as MVP.

The 2019 8A team is composed of the same group of players who also played in 7A last year. The 2018 7A team was also undefeated during the school season as well as the championship for OIS.

"The Bulldogs Sports program is very proud of this team, and no volleyball team has ever had 'back to back' undefeated regular seasons that I know about," said Mike Agers, the Athletic Director of OIS.

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