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Prep volleyball roundup: Del Norte, Southern Trinity, Arcata, Hoopa victorious

Aaron Finley/For the Times Standard
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Katie Rinkevicz had a team-high eight kills and added six service aces, as the Del Norte Warriors completed the Big Five volleyball season at 8-0 with a 25-16, 25-17, 25-18 victory over the McKinleyville Panthers in the regular season finale Thursday in Crescent City.

"We just came out flat and never got ourselves into a rhythm," McKinleyville head coach Dolores Cano said after the match.

In what was senior night for seven Warrior players, the home team got off to a blazing start, scoring 12 of the opening game's first 15 points while putting the Panthers collectively on their heels right at the outset. Forced to play catch up throughout the first stanza, the Panthers did manage to get to within 19-14 on the strength of six consecutive service points from Jessyca MacMullin, but could get no closer.

Following consecutive Warrior errors with Caryn Romanini behind the service line, the Panthers cut the Warrior lead to 22-17 before three consecutive Panther hitting errors put an end to the frame. Romanini also added a team high seven assists, while she and teammate Kaila Johnson had seven digs apiece.

The Panthers never seemed to be able to regroup, as the Warrior offense seemed to be in sync from the opening service. The result was an 11-3 Warrior run to start game two, forcing a Panther timeout. Just when it appeared the Warriors would run away and hide, once again it was MacMullin from behind the service line, along with the presence of Jocelyn Rondalski at the net offensively, that enabled McKinleyville to stay well within striking distance. Rondalski led the Panthers with eight kills.

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Trailing 11-3, the Panthers answered with a 12-7 run, forcing a Warrior timeout during the surge, as the Panthers found themselves trailing just 18-15 late in the second stanza. That would be as close as the Panthers would get though, as the Warriors responded with a 7-1 run of their own to close out the game and put the home team up two-games-to-none.

Despite having dug a sizable hole early in the match, the Panthers had no desire to go away quietly, turning the tables on the Warriors in game three and storming out to a quick 11-2 lead of their own. Romanini contributed two service aces while Madison Smith added two kills during the run, as the Warriors suddenly found themselves out of sync and on their own heels.

As was the case throughout the match at various times, the Warriors went on another scoring run, an 11-2 surge to be precise, tying the game at 13-13 and bringing what had been a boisterous and very partisan crowd all evening, back to life.

That run seemed to deflate the Panthers for good, as the squad could never regroup from the latest surge. The Warriors closed the game, and the match, on a 12-5 run, to wind up the conference season at 8-0.



So. Trinity clinches first place in Little 5

South Fork had its eyes on reclaiming the top spot in the Little 5 standings. For one game Thursday, it looked like that's exactly where they were going.

The Cubs won the first game against L5-leading Southern Trinity 25-18 but lost the last three 25-16, 25-20, 25-21 and fell securely into a second-place tie. Southern Trinity, on the other hand, locked up another league title.

South Fork's Kelsey Stillwell served 16 points, had eight digs and two aces, while teammate Amber Early served 11 points to go with three kills, six digs and seven aces.

"It was pretty intense through the whole thing," South Fork head coach Evie Todd said.

The Cubs (4-3 in the Little 5, 7-8 overall) have a shot to lock up second place when they travel to Hoopa Tuesday.

Hoopa 3, St. Bernard's 0

Led by Sara Chase's great night at service, the Warriors blanked the Crusaders to improve to 4-2.

Rachene Reed had another great night distributing the ball with 21 assits while Sara Lewis dropped the hammer compiling 10 kills.

Arcata 3, Fortuna 2

It came down to the wire, but the Tigers were finally able to clear the hump and gain their first league win of the year against the Huskies.

"W're so happy," Arcata coach Laurie Griffith said. "It was frustrating because we've been improving through the year and knew we were getting better and still didn't have a league win. It's good to get a W."

Taking the first game 25-21, Fortuna took the next two 25-19 and 25-23. But the Tigers were able to rally and win the final two games 25-20 and 15-13.

Times-Standard staff reports contributed to this story.

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