

Published May 15th, 2019

## Campolindo defeats Northgate to win NCS Championship

By Jon Kingdon



Justin Lineweaver Photo Gint Federas

After a bruising first game loss, the Campolindo boys volleyball team came back to win the next three games over the No. 1 seeded team in the tournament, Northgate, to win the North Coast Section championship by scores of 15-25, 25-21, 26-24, 25-15.

As the No. 3 seed, Campolindo had to play at Northgate in front of crowd that was equally loud for both sides, though Northgate took control of the first set and never let up. Freshman Josh Ewert, who played with a sore knee and had to be helped off the court at the end of the match, put that game behind him quickly: "I like to think that first set was just a warmup for us."

Sophomore libero Justin Lineweaver saw the first set as out of character for the Cougars: "We were just super nervous and jittery and we knew that we had to just calm down and play our game. After the first set, our defense was much more intense we started picking up balls which built our momentum from there."

Head coach David Chen has seen dominant sets like the first one from both sides and knew not to panic: "We did some good things in the first set but we couldn't get any rhythm and knew we had to hang in there. After that our defense was so much better. We've been calling out our defense all year and kept telling them, 'Defense is a mindset. See the ball and move and get it.'"

Sets two and three were very close but the defense combined with the power at the net by Ewert and sophomore Ben Blakley wore down Northgate by the fourth set. Blakley attributed the victory to the team's mindset: "It was total energy. After the first set, we picked up the energy and realized that we had to play our game."

Chen left nothing to chance in the last set with Campolindo leading 24-14 when he called time out: "I told them to stop celebrating. We haven't won yet." One service fault later, it was all over.

Just as emotional was the semifinal match between Campolindo and Acalanes, with Campolindo winning 22-25, 26-24, 25-7, 25-23. In the final set, with the score 13-13, there were nine ties until the final point.

Acalanes had defeated Campolindo in three close matches prior to the semifinal game but every game in those matches had been close.

Acalanes head coach Mason Mulvaney was certainly not looking past Campolindo: "This was the fourth time we played this year and when teams are that evenly matched, sooner or later something's got to give and I was worried about that. They played incredibly. The third set was some of the best high school volleyball I've ever seen. They played flawlessly. I was really proud of my team for coming back hard in the fourth set."

Indicative of how evenly matched the two teams were, was that despite Acalanes having won 10 sets to 5 over Campolindo in their four matches, Campolindo outscored Acalanes by a composite point total of 317 to 314.

Mulvaney's summation of the year bespoke of the pride he had for his team and particularly for the players that have been with him these past four years: "The seniors that started as freshmen have been a part of the most successful four years in Acalanes volleyball history. We won one NCS and made the playoffs all four years and our combined record over that period is 57 games over .500."

Not to be overlooked should be the job that Peter Chao did this past season with the Miramonte volleyball team. After a combined 3-28 record over the past two years and starting this season off with four straight losses, the Matadors recovered to finish the season with a 10-11 record and a 9-5 record in league play, making the NCS for the first time in many years.



Josh Ewert Photo Gint Federas



Ben Blakley Photo Gint Federas

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