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Jenna Chan makes it to Foul Shooting Championship in Chicago



Photo provided

Lori Chan, Mike Rittenhouse, Jenna Chan and Robert Chan in Chicago.

By Jon Kingdon

Jake Chan, who started for the state champion Campolindo Cougars basketball team, was not the only member of his family to compete for a championship this year. Jenna Chan, his younger sister, made it to the national finals for the Elks Hoop Shoot in Chicago, sinking 19 of 25 foul shots, finishing behind the winner who sank 22 of 25 foul shots.

Jenna, who is in the fourth grade at Donald Rheem Elementary School,

was in the 8- to 9-year-old group and in her second year of competition. This was a long and extended process in which over three million boys and girls competed in the age groups 8-9, 10-11 and 12-13 with the boys competing against the boys and the girls competing against the girls. For the 8- to 9-year-olds, the foul shot is 11 feet from the basket instead of the usual 15 feet.

The process began in December when Jenna sank 15 out of 25 shots at De LaSalle High School to qualify for the District finals in Modesto

where she sank 19 out of 25 shots. This qualified her for the Northern California semi-state level where she sank 20 out of 25 shots while also competing against representatives from California and Hawaii. She then went to Las Vegas and competed against finalists from Arizona, Utah, Nevada and California, ultimately qualifying to go to the national finals in Chicago.

Jenna's dad, Robert, gives all the credit for Jenna's ability to his wife: "Lori was a great basketball player in high school and I played football. All of our kids began playing in the Diablo Japanese Cultural Center and then moved on to CYO basketball and then the AAU League and Jenna is now playing with the Cal-Stars as well."

Lori Chan was overwhelmed at the organization and hospitality the Elks showed her and Jenna in Chicago: "The Elks paid for the flights, the hotels and the food. All we paid for were our incidentals. We arrived on Thursday and were met at the airport and shuttled to the hotel. After registering, Jenna was given a number of trading cards of herself and was encouraged to trade them with the other competitors. This was a good ice breaker for the kids along with the Elks providing a game room with snacks, board games and photo booths for the kids. Besides shopping, we all went to the Chicago White Sox - Detroit Tigers baseball game and had dinner in a private room at the stadium."

Jenna appreciated the experiences she got from competing in Las Vegas and Chicago: "I had a great time because I got to do things that were new and different, such as being driven around Las Vegas in a limousine. I did not get to see my brother Jake play in the state championship game because it was the same weekend that I was in Las Vegas, but my Mom was able to stream the game on her phone. My favorite part of the Chicago trip was meeting the other competitors and making a lot of new friends from in and out of my age group. I will definitely do this again next year."

The is the 47th year for this event and the 33rd year that Mike Rittenhouse has been with the Walnut Creek Elks and running the event. Rittenhouse, who also served as Jenna's coach, appreciated the qualities that Jenna brought to the tournament: "Jenna has a very cool demeanor and does not stress out. She showed that in Modesto, Las Vegas and Chicago."

Rittenhouse uses the term BLES to teach foul shooting, a system that he has used since he was a basketball coach at De La Salle: B for bend, L for lift the shot up, E for extend your arm, S for snap your wrist and H for hold the follow through. Rittenhouse adds: "There is no substitute for practice."

Along with "Coach Ritt," as Jenna refers to him, Jenna got a lot of support from her brother Justin who was the 9-year-old California state champion in 2013. Lori said that Justin provided Jenna with a great deal of emotional support: "Jenna worked mostly by herself, but Justin helped her with the mental aspects of the tournament. He told her not to get nervous, and not to get mad if she missed a few shots and to keep at it. He called her the night before the Las Vegas event and he left a note for her on the table which helped her with the mental aspects."

The Elks are a benevolent and protective order involved primarily with providing academic scholarships for high school seniors, offering direct services to veterans in more than 330 facilities each month, running the largest volunteer drug awareness program in the United States, and raising funds for disabled children among many other programs. California has 190 Elks lodges which are the most of any state in the country and are always looking for new members, says Rittenhouse: "We also have a soccer shoot and a little league program for special needs kids. The funds for these events come from dues and donations to the Elks National Foundation."

Campolindo defeats Northgate to win NCS Championship

... continued from page C1

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 in-

credibly. 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.

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