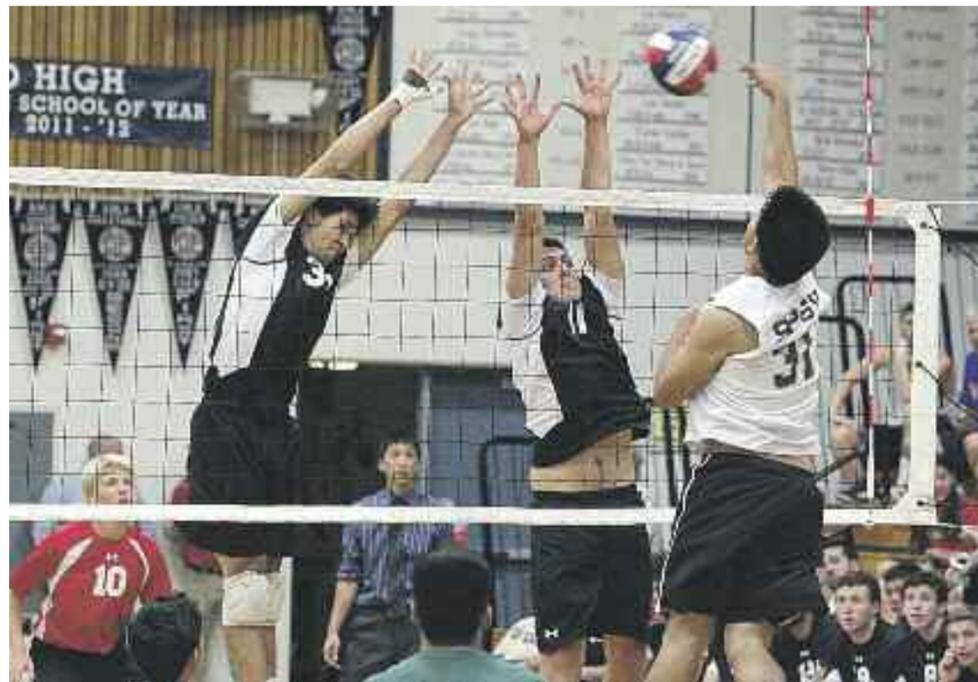


LAMORINDA SPORTS

Back-to-Back Champions

Campo boys' volleyball wins regional title

By Scott Wu



Steven Buhl (31) and Jack Eisner (11) block opponent's hit.

Photos Gint Federas

On their way to going undefeated in league, winning an NCS title, and dominating the Nor-Cal Regional Championships, the Campolindo boys' volleyball team did not lose a set. In total, the Cougars won 48 consecutive sets.

For the second year in a row, the Cougars have taken the volleyball "Triple Crown," a league title, NCS title, and Regional Championship; the team is ranked No. 9 in the nation.

"Our success has first been based on the fact that we have very experienced and skilled players all playing together on one team," head coach Dave Chen said.

Players echo the same desire to win. "We've been successful because of our determination and drive to win," junior Ryan First said.

In the finals of the 2014 Nor-Cal Regional Championships on May 31, the Cougars experience showed as they controlled the entire match, winning in straight sets, 25-19, 25-22, 29-27. For the second year, Campolindo faced Whitney High, and

while they were not taller or stronger than the Wildcats, they were sharper and played as a cohesive unit.

All aspects of the game, including serves, passes, and spikes, favored the Cougars. "It was our passers who always kept the ball alive so we had a chance to be successful," Chen explained. "We would never be in the winning position we're in now if they hadn't been able to give the ball to our multiple strikers."

Senior Steven Buhl and junior Yize Dong kept their opponents confused with key hits.

In the last set, it looked like Campo's win streak might be broken. The set was close throughout with multiple lead changes. Needing to win by two, the Cougars were pushed to extra points, eventually winning 29-27. They won the final point of the match on an ace by senior Pieter Derksen.

Players and Chen stormed the court, congratulating their teammates and later accepting their medals.

"The most important component of our game that is brought year after year is an increased desire to maintain the winning tradition that has long been part of our program," Chen said. "Just like any close family, we experience our ups and downs, but the team always finds a way to play hard for each other when the time comes."

Campolindo's hard work starts with off-court analysis that helps them compete at a high level. "Coach Dave has us watch and analyze tapes of our opponents' games during the playoffs to look for the tendencies of other teams," Dong explained.

Both Dong and First noted that off-court camaraderie is one of their favorite parts of playing on the team. "They are setting new standards for a supportive team environment that we never even thought was possible," Chen said.

After winning multiple titles and dominating league and post-season play, the Cougars will return as a top contender next year.



Ryan First sets up his teammate.



Yize Dong controls the ball.



Campolindo celebrates its fourth straight NCS title. From left: Dave Chen (head coach), Steven Buhl, Luke Hoyle, Gage Worsely, Ryan First, Michael Standing, Pieter Derksen, Joe Worsely, Jack Eisner (bottom), Walker Franklin, Charlie Mattox, Yize Dong, Griffin Bell, Nick Obrand, Sean Dobbyn, John Vuong (asst. coach) Photo Peter Constantinidis

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