

Published November 20th, 2013

## Campolindo Starts NCS Run

By Brad Kvederis



Junior Annie Doyle had a great all-around effort in the win. Photos Gint Federas

played up to the potential we could have, and finished strong," said head coach Dave Masdeo.

Acalanes also saw its season end with a loss in its first-round NCS playoff game against Analy. The Dons (16-14, 7-5) finished tied for third in the DFAL.

After easily defeating John F. Kennedy High School in the first round of North Coast Section playoffs, top-seeded Campolindo survived a scare Nov. 16, holding off visiting Petaluma in four close sets to advance to the semifinals of the NCS volleyball championships. The DFAL champion Cougars, who had some big-game experience from playing several elite opponents this year, needed every bit of it to escape with the win, 25-23, 24-26, 25-23, 25-21.

Kelley Wirth (16 kills, 5 blocks) and Kenzie Brown (40 assists) turned in solid performances to help the Cougars overcome a slow start in which they trailed for most of the first set before scoring the final five points in a row, then dropped a tight second set that went to extra points. Head coach John Vuong said that playoff jitters cost his team early, in the form of shaky passing and a few mental mistakes - but having the experience of playing in some high-profile tournaments "was a huge factor."

"We had played so many of these types of games before - the only difference is that in those tournaments, we have a second chance. Here, you don't have a second chance, and when that factor comes in, that's when the nerves start to quicken. But it helps a little bit," said Vuong.

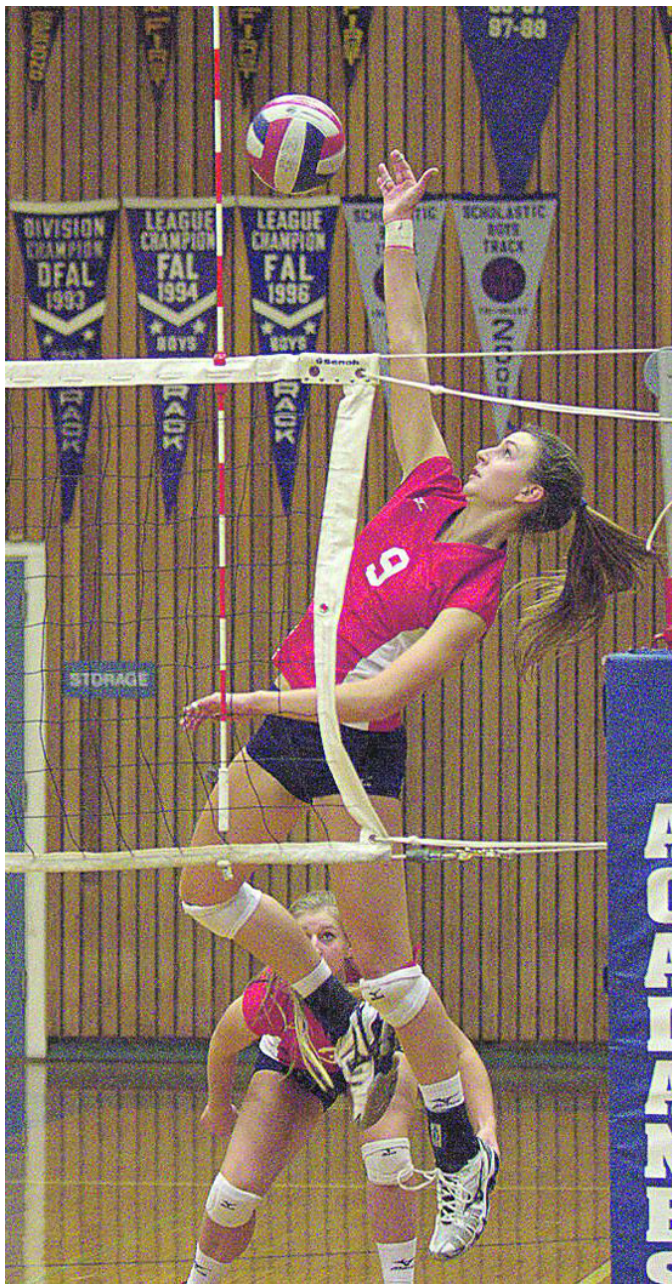
The Cougars had a tough time with Petaluma's left-handed outside hitter, Alyssa McClure, who often hit right through the defense despite having two blockers assigned to her. But Campo's combination of Wirth, Emma Johnson (6 kills, 4 blocks), and Kirsten Sibley (7 kills, 1 block) eventually proved equal to the task as the Cougars closed out the third and fourth sets with strong net play and defense.

Utility player Annie Doyle recorded a great all-around effort with 4 aces, 8 kills, 5 digs, and 2 blocks on the night. Beyond the stat sheet, several acrobatic saves by Doyle and senior captain Natalie Meniktas kept Campo in the game at key moments and countered Petaluma's big hitters. Doyle said that while there is still some getting used to the high-pressure postseason games, she and the other underclassmen are enjoying their increased roles and like their chances of continuing on in the NCS bracket.

"We're definitely a younger team, and we definitely have a lot to improve on in the next two days for semifinals," Doyle said, "but I think we've got a chance (at winning the tournament)."

Campolindo next faces Tri-County Athletic League champion Albany (29-3, 10-0 TCAL) at 7 p.m. tonight, Nov. 20, in Moraga. Albany has lost only once since Sept. 14, and defeated Miramonte in straight sets Nov. 16.

Miramonte's season came to an end with the Albany loss, but not before the Matadors (15-11, 8-4) exceeded expectations for the year by finishing second in the DFAL and winning their first-round playoff game against Terra Linda. "This year was a phenomenal year for Miramonte. We



Junior Kelley Wirth notched 16 kills.



Sophomore middle Emma Johnson had 6 kills and 4 blocks.

Reach the reporter at: [info@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:info@lamorindaweekly.com)

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA