

SPORTS

SK volleyball gaining confidence heading into league play

BY MARK KRULISH
Kitsap News Group

PORT ORCHARD — With the South Puget Sound League volleyball season right around the corner, the South Kitsap players are coming together just in time by picking up wins in their last two matches.

The Wolves' early-season schedule is typically daunting: This year, they faced Thomas Jefferson, Federal Way and North Kitsap in their first three matches, starting the season 0-3. But then they beat Auburn three sets to one on Sept. 19 and knocked off Olympic in three sets on Tuesday.

"Our league is really tough," said senior middle blocker Faith Smith. "Being able to play those non-league games really prepares some of the younger girls who haven't been on varsity get a taste of what it's like in our league games."

Against North Kitsap last week, the Wolves suffered from a few too many unforced errors. While the Vikings sure didn't make life easy on them, hitting, passing and service all could have been cleaner and may have resulted in a more competitive match.

"They were nervous against North because they know a lot of the girls and they have played with and against them," head coach C.J. Scott said. "So they were a little hyped up."

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— Faith Smith

defensively, we were really good that match."

The Wolves received contributions from across the lineup against Olympic on Tuesday. Smith led the team with eight kills, and Ashlyn Potz, Fe'Nani Frogge-Mendiola and Mykah Curtis each added four. Potz also added 11 assists and eight digs in her all-around role. Junior setter Hailey Robinson served up 14 assists and libero Lanah Duque had eight digs. Freshman Anna Harvey led the team with three aces.

South Kitsap won the match, 25-19, 25-16, 25-19. "They're all pretty equal in ability," Scott said. "Everyone can play, and that's a good

thing. We'll get a set lineup once we get into league [play]."

The match was fairly even early on as the two teams went back and forth trading points. The Wolves hit their stride with a 10-4 run in the middle of the first set, capped by a pair of kills by Smith. The defense did a good job of not allowing the Trojans too much momentum, answering quickly each time they scored.

Olympic battled back hard in the second set and the two teams were tied at 15 late. Harvey broke open the set with a kill, followed by a huge block from Smith that landed for a point. Smith scored another kill to close the set, playing error-free ball while taking advantage of Trojan mistakes. A huge 12-5 run in the third set helped South Kitsap close out the victory. The team is young this year, with several underclassmen getting significant playing



Fe'Nani Frogge-Mendiola (20) celebrates with teammate Tiana Flores along with Anna Harvey (39), Faith Smith, Abigail Gantuangco (4) and Hailey Robinson (3).

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time. Confidence and clean play will be key with perennial powers such as Puyallup, Rogers, Emerald Ridge and Curtis lurking in the distance. South Kitsap hasn't finished above seventh place since the league formed in 2016. But the youth movement should set up the program well for future seasons.

"I think this year we have better team chemistry," Smith said. We just need to build experience."

SPSL play gets going for South Kitsap on Oct. 2 when the team travels to Emerald Ridge. The home opener is Oct. 9 against Bellarmine Prep. Both matches start at 7:15 p.m.



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Sophomore Ashlyn Potz recorded four kills, eight digs and 11 assists against Olympic on Tuesday.

Athlete

Of The Week

Erik Burchill
North Kitsap High School

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North Kitsap's only league loss last season came in week three against Sequim. In 2019, the Vikings got some revenge, defeating the Wolves 16-8 in Poulsbo. Senior receiver/defensive back Erik Burchill was a key player in that victory. On offense, he was quarterback Colton Bower's top target, catching four passes for 62 yards, including a 30-yarder on the first play of the game after he took a short pass and broke a tackle to get downfield. On defense, he helped North Kitsap hold Sequim to just one offensive touchdown. Burchill had one interception and five pass breakups, several of which came in the second half as Sequim tried to get back into the game.

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