

Volleyball serves up win, then duels it out in a marathon match

By Rongi Yost
Correspondent

The Lady Outlaws have been stellar all season at the serving line, and that held true in their 25-6, 25-10, and 26-16 sweep at Sutherlin on Tuesday, September 19. Two days later, Sisters battled through a grueling five-set match at home against Sweet Home before they recorded the win.

In Tuesday's action, Sisters jumped out early and never looked back in their first-set win. Hawley Harrer went on a seven-point serving run, which extended the Outlaws' lead to 15-3. Jessie Brigham closed out the set with a six-point serving run.

Sets two and three saw the Outlaws continue their steady and consistent play from the service line. Sisters tallied 14 aces for the match, and kept the Bulldogs off balance the entire night.

Harrer led the squad with nine kills, three blocks, 16 assists, and three aces. Cantwell recorded nine kills and two aces, and Brigham contributed seven digs and two aces. Erynn Ricker added six kills and three blocks.

Coach Rory Rush said, "We played well tonight. Our serving was the key to the game, as it took Sutherlin out of their system. We had a big presence at the net with some key blocks to further pull them out of their offense. It was nice to see all facets of our game come together as we dominated from start to finish."

On Thursday, the start of the Outlaws' home match against Sweet Home was dismal, to say the least. It was a long, exhausting match for

both teams, which finally resulted in a win for the Outlaws with scores of 1-25, 23-25, 25-22, 25-16, and 15-7.

The Huskies came out on fire in set one, took an early lead, and never looked back. They had a strong attack, and were a force on the net with big blocks as well as some great kills. Sweet Home never trailed once during the entire set. The Outlaws, on the other hand, looked flat and out of sync, which Coach Rush stated was not a good start at all for the home team. Sisters only had eight kills in the set, six of which came from Harrer.

It was a much closer second set. Midway through, the Outlaws were down 13-15, and then the Huskies went on a four-point serving run to break open their lead to a 13-19 advantage. Sisters was able to close the gap at 22-24, but just couldn't finish. Ashlynn Cantwell was perfect on her kill attempts, and went 5-for-5.

The Outlaws started the third game in the hole with a daunting 0-2 deficit, and knew they had an uphill battle ahead of them. The Huskies took an early 5-3 lead, and later went up 15-9. Sophie Silva had two serving aces during a three-point run that narrowed the gap and took the Outlaws to just a three-point deficit at 12-15.

A couple of serves later, with the Outlaws down 10-15, Brigham stepped up to the service line. Jessie served and tied it up 19-19. Sisters gained the momentum they so desperately needed thanks to two kills by Cantwell and double-block by Cantwell and Sophie

Silva.

Ellie Rush stepped back to serve with the Outlaws down by one. Her first serve was an ace to even the score 21-21. She was able to score one more point, which gave the Outlaws a one-point lead. Sisters closed out the set with an ace from Cantwell, and two kills from Harrer, which forced game four. The Outlaws had five serving aces in the set, along with 15 kills and 13 digs.

In the fourth, Sisters came out strong and took control. Serving was again a key factor. Two aces and several disruptive serves got the Huskies out of their rhythm. SH took their turn at making unforced errors, just as the Outlaws had done in the first two sets. Harrer had some huge kills which set the tone for the set.

Rush said, "This was a game that was a well-rounded team effort. Harrer had six kills, Cantwell had four, Sam Silva had three, and Erynn Ricker and Sophie Silva had one each."

In the final set, Sisters led from the start and never looked back. The Outlaws found themselves up 7-5 when Sophie Silva had a strong serving run that pushed the Outlaws to a 10-5 advantage, and took the wind out of the Huskies' sails. Sisters was able to limit Sweet Home's runs and maintained control for the comeback-win. Ricker had three blocks in the final set, with two back to back that



PHOTO BY JERRY BALDOCK

Jessie Brigham gets the dig in Outlaws volleyball action.

really broke the game wide open.

Harrer finished the night with 25 kills, 20 assists, and 15 digs, followed by Cantwell, who recorded 17 kills, eight digs and two aces. Ellie Rush dished out 25 assists, two aces, and was 100 percent at the service line, going 18-for-18.

Sam Silva tallied seven kills and 10 digs. Ricker had five blocks, and Sophie Silva had three blocks and three aces, and went 20 for 20 at the line. Libero Jessie Brigham did a fabulous job in the back row and tallied 32 digs, three aces, and was also 100 percent from the service line (16-for-16).

Rush said, "Tonight we started off out of sync against a very motivated and aggressive Sweet Home team. There was no chemistry on the floor, we had too many unforced

errors, and the fear of losing a league game began to set in. I was very proud of the girls for coming together in set three. They were able to focus and persevere when their backs were to the wall. The seniors did a great job of providing leadership both mentally and athletically. Their experience over the last four years was evident tonight as they battled back from a 0-2 deficit."

Sisters and Sweet Home were the last two undefeated teams in the Sky-Em League, so the win pushed Sisters to the No. 1 spot. The Outlaws are currently the No. 1-ranked team in the OSAA rankings.

Sisters was to play at Elmira on Tuesday, September 26. The Outlaws will host Junction City on Thursday, September 28. The match is set to begin at 6 p.m.

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