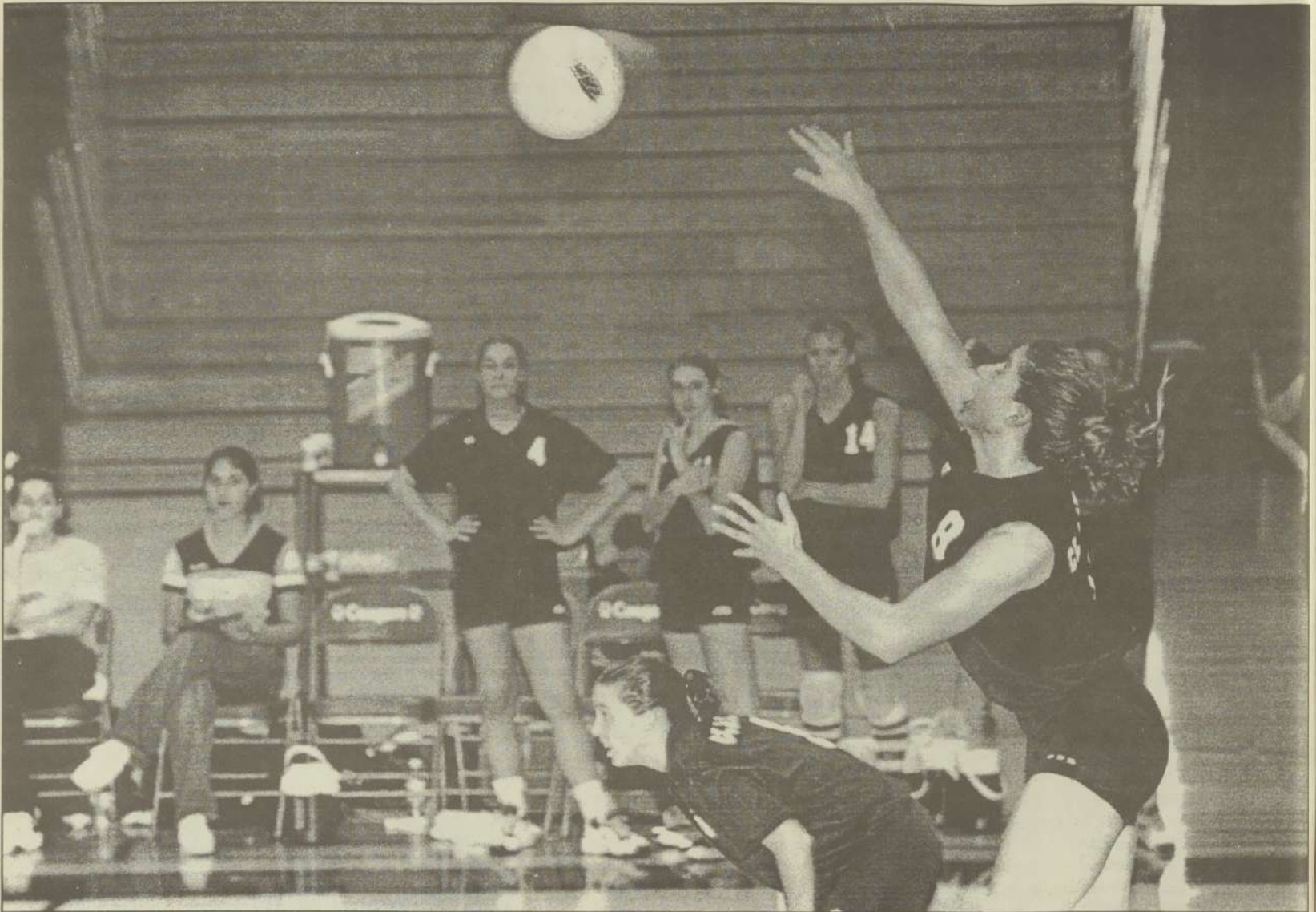




KARL KATZKE / Clackamas Print

Sophomore Judi Arbuckle jump serves against the Chemeketa Storm last Wednesday while her Clackamas teammates look on. Arbuckle and the Cougars won the match to earn their fourth-straight Southern Region title.

Champions: One title down, one to go

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which pulled Clackamas into the tie for the region title.

Clackamas' only loss was at the hands of the Storm in Salem in October.

With the win, the Cougars set up a showdown for the top seed from the Southern Region on the line this past Saturday.

Clackamas wanted the #1 spot heading into this week's tournament.

"Saturday's game was huge for us," noted Woods. "You're really playing for the right to call yourself the best team in the state. It's about bragging rights, but more importantly, it gives you a first round bye at the NWAACC tournament."

"Saturday's game had a different feeling to it compared to Wednesday's match. I think Chemeketa came in with a little more respect. They knew how good we really are. They just made more errors."

In the first game, Chemeketa rolled past the Cougars en route to a 15-6 victory.

In the second, Clackamas battled its way to a 15-9 win to even the score.

Game three turned into no game at all as the Cougars made quick work of the Storm 15-5.

In game four, a frustrated Chemeketa squad looked beaten as Clackamas took an 8-1 lead.

The Storm rebounded, however, to knot the score at 8-8.

Clackamas put Chemeketa away for good in a 15-10 win.

Coach Woods and Assistant Coach Jake Harwood recognized a number of players for stepping up.

"Amy Kraljev played awesome in both matches against Chemeketa," said Woods. "She was very consistent."

"Nikki [Tilton] did an awesome job setting on Saturday," noted Harwood.

"Jen [Rogers] did a great job too," added Woods. "She really stepped in and played aggressive and was dominating at the net. She doesn't get as many opportunities because we have so many middle blockers but she stepped in and really helped us."

The match win stunned fans, coaches and players that traveled from the state capital.

The team that was ranked #12 in the nation at the start of the year was #2 in Oregon.

The Clackamas victory shook the NWAACC, as well.

The latest Horizon Air/Coaches' Poll shows the change.

Heading into a tournament hosted by Pierce College two weeks ago, Clackamas was picked as the #4 team in the Northwest.

Chemeketa looked to be #3 while Pierce and Spokane ranked 1 and 2 respectively.

Clackamas faced Spokane in

pool play at the Pierce Tournament and were dispelled by the Sasquatch despite winning the first game.

After battling through the rest of the tournament, Clackamas faced the Pierce Raiders in the semi-finals.

In the first game, the favored Raiders looked to be no match for the Cougars as Clackamas cruised to a 15-3 win.

In the second game, Pierce fought its way to a win to set up a third game.

The Cougars and Raiders clashed throughout the match which ended in a 17-15 win for Clackamas.

A win over the #1 team in the Northwest was only the first step in Clackamas' drive to earning back its respect.

The match set up a championship game between Spokane and Clackamas that proved to be a great contest.

The Cougars, who defeated Spokane twice in the first half of the year, have dropped two straight matches to the Sasquatch after losing in the Pierce Tournament championship 13-15, 13-15.

After wins over Chemeketa this week, Spokane stands at #1 in the NWAACC followed by Clackamas, Pierce and Chemeketa, respectively.

With its respect regained in the league, Clackamas heads to Walla Walla this week with confidence and determination.

"For the first time since the beginning of the year," noted Woods,

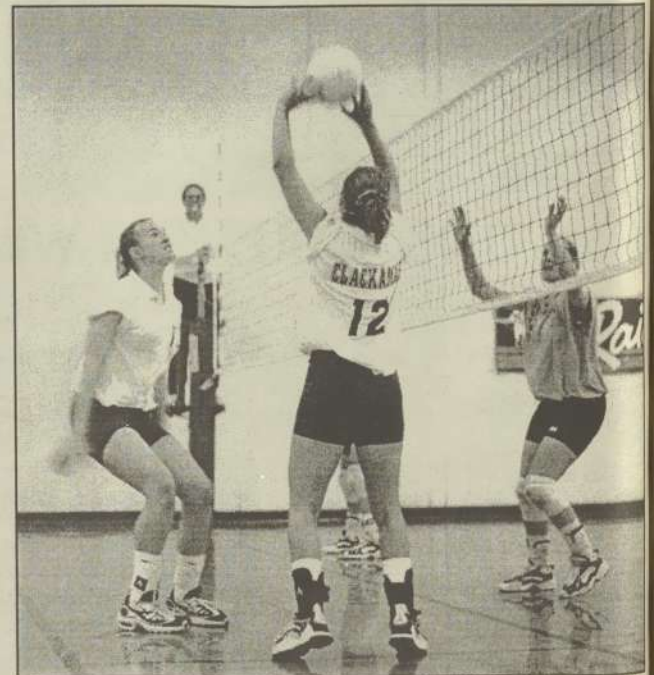
"this team is really excited about playing volleyball. They're having fun again."

"As long as we keep our focus and remember that we are playing volleyball and not who we are playing then we'll be fine. With Chemeketa, they like to play a lot of mind games and sometimes can even get a little nasty. We just love to play volleyball. If we worry about playing vol-

leyball and not about the team we are playing then nobody will beat us."

Entering its final week, Clackamas has one more drive for its second NWAACC title in three years.

"I like where we are right now," said Woods. "We've come up a notch but we've got a little more to go. We have one more final push and that motivates us."



JOHN THORBURN / Clackamas Print

Freshman setter Nikki Tilton assists sophomore Jen Rodgers against Spokane in the championship match in the Pierce Tournament last week. Tilton was a key player in the Cougars' win over Chemeketa last Saturday.