

# Brother and Sister:

A series of small moments help siblings unite an entire team

Jeff Sorensen  
The Clackamas Print

Editor's note: This is the third part of a three-part series on the Kamahoaoho siblings, Malia and Ryan.

The Cougars were down two games in their match against their rival, Mt. Hood State, in their final volleyball contest at home, and before the third and final game could begin, Cougar Head Coach Kathie Woods stopped everything and picked up a microphone. She told the audience that there was a very special award the volleyball team wanted to present to their number one fan, and then called Ryan Kamahoaoho's name. Ryan was handed a backpack with a Cougar Volleyball T-shirt inside to show the team's gratitude for his dedication as their biggest fan for the year, but because of a handicap that Ryan was born with, he had trouble finding the zipper to open the bag and retrieve his new shirt. That's when his sister, Malia, stepped from amidst her teammates on the Cougar bench and — just as she had done countless times before — helped him open the bag to find the shirt. Before giving her baby brother a hug, they shared that moment, the crowd roared with approval, and Malia returned to her team. After deciding things weren't working out in Los Angeles, Malia made the decision to move home to Oregon City, where she landed on to a spot on the Clackamas volleyball team at 22 years old. But Malia was three years old when Ryan was born, and according to their family, has been on his side through most of his toughest

challenges ever since. "She's had a connection with him even more than the other two [siblings], obviously because they were closer in age, but she really was there for him even when he was getting lines put in or he was hurting," said their mother, Jackie. "She would be holding his hand, or singing to him, or trying to be comforting him while [the doctors] were poking him, or whatever they were doing."

Malia had talked about the possibility of continuing her volleyball career beyond Clackamas, and if she plays for a four-year school, she knows one of the hardest things to do would be to move away from her family again, and particularly Ryan.

"If I was to go away [again], I wouldn't want to go that far," Malia said. "I remember being down in California, and talking [to Ryan] on the phone ... and there was a point where he started to tell jokes, and he wouldn't do that before. Like, one time when we went to a volleyball game, and the ref made a bad call, and Ryan goes, 'Come on, ref! I'm blind and even I saw that!' To miss him growing up was really sad. That's the good stuff that you miss."

Ryan loves to play around with sports at home, and admits that his favorite sport is basketball, but with a family constantly surrounded by volleyball, Ryan has managed to develop an impressive understanding of the game.

"He knows the game of volleyball so well, it's weird. We're not really sure how much he can see, but he has an amazing grasp on the game," Malia said.

"He knows when a coach should call a time-out or not," said his father, Bryan. "He'll sit back, even if he's not on my

bench, and he'll say, 'My dad needs to call a time-out right now!'"

But, at Clackamas, Ryan's place is cheering on Malia and the Cougars, a fact that Woods couldn't be happier about.

"He's so loving," said Woods in a post-

NWAACC tournament interview. "It's a pleasure and honor to be able to coach and have that kind of support."

At the end of the year banquet for the volleyball team, Kathie Woods stood at a podium and spoke into another microphone, addressing everyone on her team and coaching staff, and thanking them for another wonderful year of Cougar Volleyball. Then, she made a brief mention of their number one fan, and the entire room full of Cougar players, coaches, family and friends gave Ryan a standing ovation while they chanted his name.

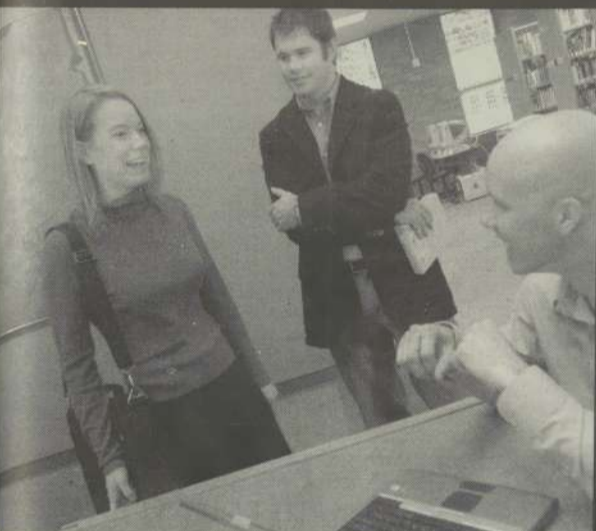
It was a small (but successful) moment in sports for Ryan Kamahoaoho, and another moment for him that wouldn't have been possible without his big sister.

Ryan Kamahoaoho donned his T-shirt gift from the volleyball team and shared a hug with his sister, Malia, after the Cougars' final home game.



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