

# Willamina Volleyball Takes Third At State

■ Tribal member Meghan Zimbrick steps up to lead the team in playoffs.

Photos by Peta Tinda

By Ron Karten

What a season for the Bulldogs' volleyball team.

Finishing third at state doesn't describe it.

At the beginning of November, they were at the top of their form, headed for playoff city. They had been ranked in the top ten all season. They had beaten every team that ought to be competitive in the playoffs. Then senior Caitlyn Chewning, team captain and first team All-West Valley, sprained her ankle at practice.

"This would have been her third year competing at state," said Coach Carrie Zimbrick.

Before the State playoffs started, she was out of the competition.

"We played well," said Zimbrick, "but we were playing in a new rotation. We got frustrated more easily. We didn't anticipate things. We were out of our comfort zone."

"Changing the rotation completely changed our defense and everything," said Zimbrick.

Still, the girls went into the playoffs rated tenth in the state and came out a solid third.

"We were thrilled with the finish," said Zimbrick. "We came in as a third seed, and this was the first year that third seeds got to play in the playoffs. In previous years, we wouldn't have got to be at state."

Tribal member Meghan Zimbrick, the coach's daughter, was selected to the First Team/All Tournament. She led significantly in the "kills" (a hit that results in a point) department. She had 58 during the course of the tournament. Next leader in kills for the team was Crislyn Chewning, who had 28.

Coach Zimbrick also credits "all of the girls" for this year's success. "Brittney Wilson stepped up huge," she said. "She took the lone setting position (that all season she had shared with Caitlin Chewning.)"

"With (Caitlyn) Chewning healthy, we really thought we would compete for the championship. We knew there were eight teams that could easily win the state championship. It came down to who wanted it the most."

Next year, the Bulldogs' volleyball team will lose four seniors: Caitlyn Chewning, Shalise Holsclaw, Nicole Risseuw and Chelsea Bryant. Nine varsity players will be returning, said Zimbrick, and six of them will have "solid State (championship) experience." Two returning players are All-League selections this year: Meghan



**Air Time** — Tribal member Meghan Zimbrick goes up for a point at the state volleyball playoffs held in Forest Grove. Zimbrick led the team in "kills" (a hit that results in a point) with 58 in the course of the tournament.

Zimbrick and Crislyn Chewning.

"It was definitely a team effort to do what they did," said Zimbrick. "They all stepped up and did what they needed to do."

## The Playoff Results

In the first round state playoff game in Drain against North Douglas, Willamina won in 4 games for the best three of five competition: 25-11, 19-25, 25-19 and 28-26.

In the first game of the second round of playoffs, all held at Pacific University in Forest Grove, Willamina defeated Corbett in best two of three: 18-25, 26-24, 4-15.

In the second game of the second round, Willamina defeated Weston McEwen, the eventual state champs, in the best two of three: 19-25, 25-23, 15-13.

"The girls came together (against McEwen)," said Zimbrick. "The girls gelled and decided that they were not going to get beat."

In the third game of the second

round, Willamina defeated Lakeview ranked at least third all season in the best two of three: 25-16, 25-21. "Lakeview had just come off being a 3A school, and they've always done really well at 3A level," said Zimbrick.

In the battle of the remaining "Elite Eight" teams, the Dawgs played their best volleyball of the whole weekend, according to Zimbrick. The result: Willamina won the best two of three against the Oregon Episcopal School: 25-23, 25-15. The Oregon Episcopal School previously beat the Dawgs in the post-season playoffs leading to the state championships.

"That put us on the winner's side of bracket," said Zimbrick.

The finals came against Union. The Dawgs defeated them last year to fin-

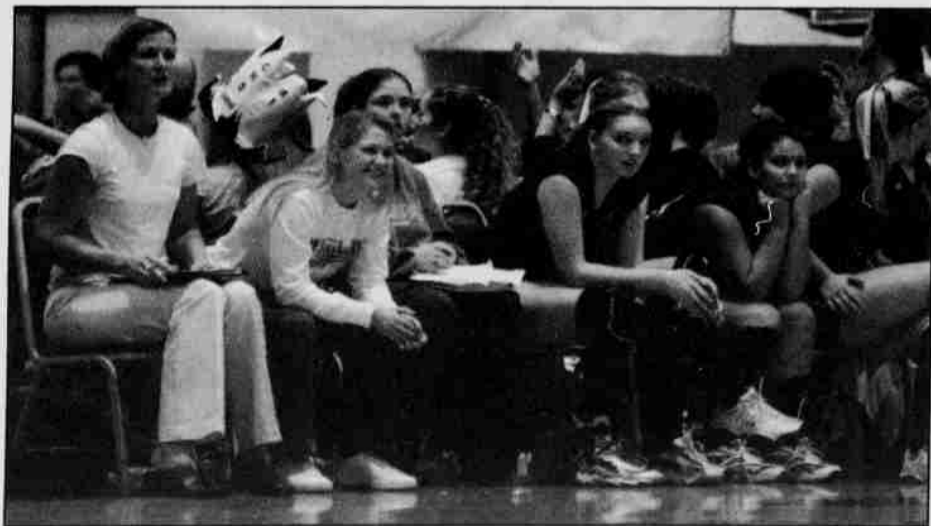
ish fourth with Union taking sixth place in the state, but this year, Willamina lost the best two of three: 25-23, 25-27, 3-15.

Zimbrick described the road to the team's broken heart. "We were ahead the whole second game," she said. "They made some adjustments that were really smart. We couldn't cover. We really let down in that third game."

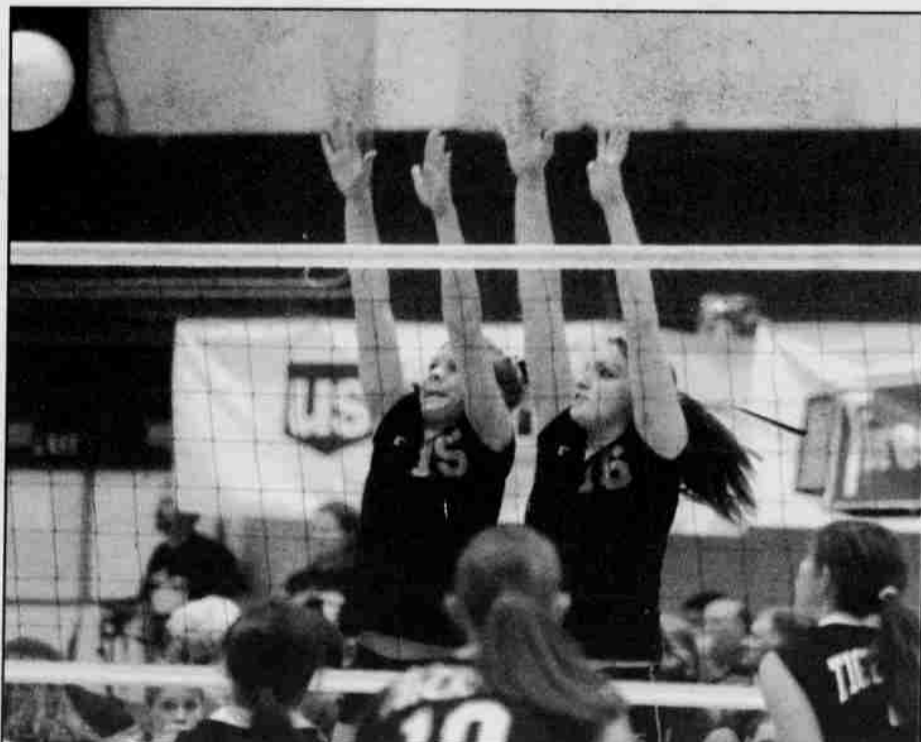
In the finals game for 3<sup>rd</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> place, Willamina faced Santiam Christian, last year's state champs. Willamina won in three straight for the best three of five: 25-12, 20-25, 15-10.

Union took second. Weston McEwen took state.

"We were oh-so-close to being one or two," said Zimbrick. ■



**Team Effort** — Coach Carrie Zimbrick, (left) watches as her team goes up against Lakeview High School.



**"D" Is The Key** — Crislyn Chewning and Shalise Holsclaw successfully block a point during a game against Corbett High School.