

Viks from 1B

passing, it was one of the best games we've had. If we don't have good passing, we don't have good anything. About the middle of the second game, we found rhythm and our passing game was spot on."

The Vikings won the first set by five points, but struggled in the second set, with the Pirates tying the match after winning the second set.

At that point, Siuslaw rose to the occasion and took the momentum back with a hard-fought 27-25 victory to go up 2-1 over the Pirates. The front row had a standout performance. Desiree Tupua had 21 kills in the match, and Kya Blake had eight kills. Hailee Outlaw had an especially solid set, with a spike to win on the 27th point.

"Hailee was on," said Cole. "She felt it and she knew it. She was going for the ball every single time."

In the fourth and final set, the Vikings secured the win, finishing 25-16 to sweep the Pirates for the season.

The following night, (April 1), Siuslaw was back on its home court to host its final game of the season. In addition, it was also Senior Night. Outside hitter Kya Blake, who was a part of history this week by sweeping Marshfield for the first time in her Viking volleyball career, was recognized by the school and family members for her contributions.

Going into the game, Cole explained that the girls had multiple motivations to defeat the Lions, who at the time were tied for first with Junction City.

"It was about the first time we played them, losing by two in that fifth set," she said, "We knew we could beat them then — and we knew it Thursday night. We wanted to prove that."

The girls also wanted to send their only senior off on a positive note.

"Obviously, they wanted to win for Kya," said Cole. "They just put it all out there. I never even brought it up once about who's ranked this or that, it didn't really matter."

In the first set, Siuslaw came out swinging and took the lead early on, forcing Cottage Grove to call a time-out once the score had reached 10-4.



NED HICKSON/SIUSLAW NEWS

Siuslaw's lone senior, Kya Blake, scores on a hard-hit kill against Cottage Grove in the Viks' final game of season Thursday night.

Tupua, Blake and Outlaw were already showing up strong at the net, and Zoe Alberty's setting and sneak tips were on point.

Siuslaw held the lead, but the Lions started to rally with strong serving and offensive firepower at the net. The Lions managed to tie the game and, in the last few points, cause the Vikings to commit enough errors that the Lions were able to narrowly win the first set, 25-23.

According to Cole, the girls knew they would have to do more to earn the win.

"It's more about them having to fight a little bit harder for it, wanting it and putting everything they have out on the court — because this is the last game we have," Cole told her players heading into the second set.

The Vikings shook off the first set and re-focused.

"Coming into that second game, we were just ready," asserted Cole. "I also told them to feed off of the energy in the gym."

The student section in the Siuslaw gym was particularly packed for Senior Night, which helped the girls with their own energy levels.

"I think they fed off

of that energy from the student section. But we just we just knew we had to work a little bit harder and get the momentum on our side," Cole said. "Even after that loss in the first game, they knew, 'We've got this,' and I knew they had it, too."

The next three sets the girls were relentless, and with the exception of the second set's first point, the Viks didn't let Cottage Grove take the lead in the next two sets, winning 25-22 and 25-21.

In the fourth and final set, the Lions were able to pull ahead by a few points in the middle of the game. Both teams inched along point by point until the game was tied 24-24. In the very end, some key plays from Blake — in-

cluding a perfectly timed sneak tip and two thundering kills — brought the Vikings to victory, 27-25.

"I'm really glad Kya got that last hit," said Cole. "You can't ask for anything more as a senior — to get a kill on your last hit."

Cole said, though all but one member of this year's team will be returning next season, "We are going to feel it without Kya. She's a big part of the team, not just with the stats. She's the one that gets them pumped up and out of their heads. It's going to be rough without her."

Statistically, Siuslaw had an outstanding performance. Tupua brought her kill count to 45 in two days, with a whopping

24 kills Thursday night against Cottage Grove. Blake had 19 kills in her final Vikings volleyball game, and Outlaw had seven kills.

In addition, Alberty contributed four kills and four blocks, and Alizabeth Norton also had two kills and one block.

In the back row, Meika Shappell and Hayden Muller did an incredible job digging the spikes that were put down by Cottage Grove. Both also had an outstanding performance from the service line.

Cole was immensely proud of her team, and very pleased to end the season on such a high

note. "You can't really ask for anything better than that," said Cole. "Beating Marshfield twice, sweeping them in a season, and then beating Cottage Grove. It technically was a huge upset. But we knew we were better. We just had to prove it to them, and we prove it to ourselves."

And prove it they did, causing Cottage Grove to fall to second place in the league, and putting their own team in third with an overall record of 6-4.

"This season was about focusing on a winning season," explained Cole, "and we accomplished it."

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