

El Camino College women's volleyball team has the will, finds a way

By Erik Boal, Staff Writer

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REDDING - El Camino College was outsized, outhit and outblocked against Cabrillo College in the opening match of the California Community College Athletic Association women's volleyball state championship tournament.

But despite relinquishing six match points in the fourth game and two more in the fifth Saturday, the Warriors found a way to outlast the top seed from Northern California 25-19, 19-25, 25-22, 25-27, 15-11 at Shasta College.

"We might not be the best digging team or the best passing team, but we find a way to get it done," Lauren Edwards said. "We want to go all the way. We're willing to do whatever it takes."

El Camino (25-2) survived several anxious moments to advance to today's winner's bracket semifinal at 10a.m. against rival Pierce College (31-0), which rallied for a five-game victory over Santa Rosa in a rematch of last year's title match.

The Warriors suffered a four-game loss to Pierce in the Sept. 17 final of the San Diego Mesa tournament, in addition to being eliminated in the third round of regional competition last year by the Brahmas, who went on to capture their first state title.

Before they focused on the long-awaited rematch with Pierce, the Warriors took a moment to catch their breath after surviving a collapse that nearly resulted in them having to play an

elimination match later Saturday.

"I think we lost our fire (in the fourth), but in the fifth game, we came back and pushed through,"

said Tarryn Luafalemana, who had 18 kills, three in the deciding game.

"It's big because it gives us a rest and allows us to come together as a team, regroup and refocus."

Similar to the first game, in which El Camino built an early 10-point lead behind the hitting of Luafalemana, Teuila Barnes and Katie Child, the Warriors led from the opening point of the fourth game and stretched their advantage to 24-18 on a crosscourt putaway by Lauren Edwards (13 kills).

Cabrillo (28-3) then took advantage of three El Camino errors to pull within 24-22, before Sierra Clark ended a long rally with a quick attack that landed in the middle of the Warriors' defense. Jordan Cotton then served an ace for the Seahawks to tie the score at 24-24.

A block by Clark gave Cabrillo its first lead at 25-24, but a Seahawks service error gave El Camino another chance to close out the match. But back-to-back kills by Clark, who had a

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team-high 18, forced a deciding game.

"We just had to stay relaxed. The whole match we were playing kind of tight," Lauren Edwards said. "We just had to go back to basics and be aggressive and swing away."

After the teams played to a 7-7 tie in the fifth, El Camino scored six of the next seven points to seize momentum.

Kaitlyn Edwards, who added eight kills, gave the Warriors a seventh match point with a shot down the line, before Clark tried to rally Cabrillo to another improbable comeback.

Luafalemana didn't allow any further drama by burying a hard-angle shot into the deep right corner, forcing Cabrillo to play in the final match of the day against Santa Rosa (29-3).

Sarah McFadden had 46 assists and 14 digs for El Camino, which received 16 digs from libero Keely Stevenson, 11 digs and three aces from Barnes and 10 digs from Lauren Edwards.

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