

Bulldogs spoil Lady Wildcats Senior Night

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DELPHOS — Columbus Grove had a little too much firepower for Jefferson Tuesday night, grabbing a 25-14, 25-12, 25-22 Northwest Conference volleyball sweep at Jefferson High School.

The Lady Bulldogs (16-5, 9-1 NWC) ruined the final home matches for two Jefferson (7-14, 2-7 NWC) seniors: Fallon Van Dyke (5 kills) and Caitlin Landwehr).

"That is a very good hitting team with a lot of weapons. Still, I told the girls that this was the best we've moved in a long time," Jefferson coach Joy Early said. "We needed to with their power hitting and some of the crazy stuff they were doing up front: quicks, slides and other things. I'm glad to see that as we get ready for the tournament."

The Lady Bulldogs (16-5, 9-1 NWC), coming off a sweep of PCL power Kalida the night before, used its stellar net play behind 6-0 senior Faith Huff, 5-11 junior Julia Wynn (12 kills, 5 blocks) and 5-11 junior Sammi Stechschulte from the word go. They steadily built up a lead in the first set and grabbed the set on an ace by sophomore Sydney McCluer.

"That was a very emotional win for us last night. I'm just glad we came tonight and went about our business," Grove coach Kelly Lepley noted. "I'm happy that we were able to bounce back so quickly. It helps that we come off a win like that. We came out pretty well, which was good."

Bulldog junior Rachel Schumacher (30 assists) served up the first seven points of set two, forcing Early to call timeout. The Lady Wildcats could never recover from that deficit. They simply could not contend consistently with the long and lean Bulldog front-liners, especially with the tallest Lady Wildcat being the 5-9 junior Katelyn Goergens (7 kills, 4 digs). A kill by junior Elizabeth Selhorst and an ace from sophomore Sydney McCluer (4 aces) put the visitors up 2-0. The Bulldogs scored the first three markers of the third set but the Red and White was not going to go away quietly. They rallied behind the likes of Goergens, junior Rileigh Stockwell (3 kills) and sophomore Brooke Culp (13 assists). The hosts held the lead at several different times and it was close for the first half of the set. After Stockwell put one down off the Grove block, the Wildcats led 13-12. Then came the decisive span: 10-0 in favor of the guests, forcing Early to use both of her timeouts. Wynn (2 kills, 3 stuffs), Huff (1 kill, 2 stuffs) and an ace by Schumacher put the Bulldogs up 21-12. However, the hosts had a last rally. With three kills from Goergens leading the way, they got within 22-21 on a hitting error. However, sophomore Briana Glass hit an off-speed hit to break the host momentum. A hitting error on match point sealed the deal.

"I was happy with the hustle we showed tonight. We have struggled some lately," Early added.

"We have lost a few sets in a row and it would be easy for the girls to drop their heads and not hustle but they don't. We have shown glimpses of putting it all together. I know we can do it; we just have to get there. I know we will."

"I put in some junior varsity players in the third set to try and give them some playing time," Lepley added. "Any time you put in some new people with girls they're not used to with, you'll have some struggles. At the same time, Jefferson kept up its intensity."

Kelli Vorst added 15 digs for the guests.

Grove won the junior varsity match 25-8, 25-10.

Jefferson visits Kalida 6 p.m. Thursday to end the regular season; Grove hosts Ottawa-Glandorf 10 a.m. Saturday.