

Schoolcraft spikers clinch region crown

By C.J. Risaak
staff writer

Successes keep piling up for Schoolcraft College's volleyball team, but as high as they seem to mount the Ocelots still get little respect.

Take the Region XII tournament last weekend at Kalamazoo Valley Community College. Despite their unbeaten Eastern Conference season, despite their victory over highly regarded Lansing CC in the two team's only meeting, despite a bundle of wins over four-year colleges, the Ocelots were still seeded second.

No matter. Schoolcraft showed what true team play is, surviving an injury to a key performer, beating LCC twice in a row and going unbeaten in the double-elimination regional to win the Region XII title and earn a berth in the 16-team NJCAA championships at Miami Dade South CC Nov. 28-30.

"WE HAD the fewest amount of players, we had the shortest team, and we were definitely the youngest with only one sophomore," said Schoolcraft coach Tom Teeters, who was honored as region coach of the year.

Still, Teeters figured the Ocelots deserved the No. 1 seed going into the tournament instead of LCC, since they had beaten LCC earlier this season. But, as Teeters noted, defensive teams don't get the respect of power-hitting squads, and Schoolcraft definitely relies on defense.

"Our defense sets up our offense," he said. "It all starts there. We always play good team defense. Our shots do get blocked, but we just pick it up and go back up with it."

"And we set up a good block for a small team. Lansing tried to go around our blocks instead of hitting through them and ended up hitting a lot of balls out of bounds."

BEATING LCC was no easy task. In fact, it took an official's call against LCC coach Ellen Dempsey in the finals to give Schoolcraft the match-winning point.

The Ocelots defeated LCC in the semifinals 15-12, 15-13 behind the strong play of Kathy McIntosh (from Wayne Memorial), who picked up the slack when Sue Cyrus (Garden City) injured her knee late in the final game of the previous match, a 14-16, 15-5, 15-13 victory over Henry Ford CC.

Cyrus has torn cartilage and a stretched ligament. Her chances of playing in the NJCAA tournament are 50-50, according to Teeters.

"We played poorly in the first two matches and half of the Henry Ford match," Teeters said. "We started coming on in the second game (against HFCO). Sue was hot. She was our top hitter for the day."

Cyrus finished with 33 kills and a .305 attack average in an opening 15-7, 15-4 win over Cuyahoga Metro CC, a second-round 15-9, 14-16, 15-8 triumph over Macomb CC and the quarter-final victory over HFCO.

DESPITE THE ABSENCE of their outside hitter, Schoolcraft hardly missed a beat in its semifinal with LCC. The final, a best-of-five duel, was far more difficult. The Ocelots survived, 13-15, 15-12, 15-13, 7-15, 15-13.

The final point of the match was awarded to Schoolcraft when Dempsey called time out with the score 14-13, Schoolcraft. But LCC had no more time outs to call and the official gave Dempsey a yellow card, or warning. She ignored it and pulled her



FILE PHOTO

North Farmington grad Donna Konjarevich came off the bench to help Schoolcraft win the regional volleyball championship.

team off the court. The official then gave the Ocelots the point and the match.

It was a sour end to an otherwise superb match. Schoolcraft trailed 10-2 and 11-6 in the second game before rallying to win. The Ocelots were also down 13-11 in both the third and fifth games before storming back for victories.

LCC had its moments, too, trailing 7-0 before winning the fourth game and down 11-4 in the fifth. "It was hard for us to take them, especially without Sue," admitted Teeters.

THE OCELOTS got excellent play from Ann Bennett, filling in for Cyrus as midside blocker and outside hitter. Bennett collected 36 kills in the tourney. Amy Lotero (Livonia Franklin) and Donna Konjarevich (North Farmington) came off the bench to turn in impressive performances.

Kim Relyea and Linda Loeffler, both from Livonia Sveasen, and McIntosh were named to the all-tournament team. Relyea had 64 kills and a .277 attack average, while Loeffler collected 65 assists and 17 serving aces. The 5-foot-4 McIntosh finished with 30 kills, including eight in the final.

How well Schoolcraft will do at nationals is difficult to predict, but as Teeters said, "I definitely know we're not going to be outclassed, but we will have to be at the top of our game."

Schoolcraft's successes have surprised more than one opponent. At nationals, the Ocelots could surprise some others.



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menillo, 7-5, 6-3. Chimenillo is Davidson's doubles partner in most USTA national events.

In the finals, Davidson beat Sherri Bash, the No. 1 player from Ohio, 7-5, 3-6, 6-3.

Davidson, a student at East Middle School, is expected to be return as the No. 6 ranked Girls 12 player nationally when the new USTA rankings come out next year.

Young Davidson captures 1st national tennis tourney

Cory Davidson, 12-year-old tennis standout from Farmington Hills, captured the Lexington-McDonald's Invitational Tennis Tournament last weekend in Kentucky.

The tournament featured 16 of the nation's top junior amateur players in all United States Tennis Association (USTA) age divisions.

Davidson, ranked No. 17 nationally in Girls 12 last year, defeated the No. 1 players from three regions en route to her first national title.

In the third round she topped Holly Lord, the No. 1 Girls 12 player from Indiana, 3-6, 6-4, 6-1.

IN THE semifinals, Davidson dented the No. 1 player from the Eastern States region, Amy Chimenillo, 7-5, 6-3.



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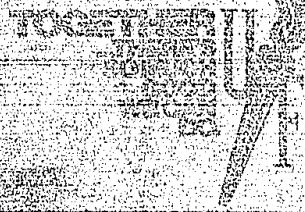
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