

Bedford avenges loss to Chargers

By Brad Emmons
staff writer

It was a rerun of last year's Class A state championship, but with a slightly different ending.

Temperance-Redford won its first Scholcraft Invitational volleyball title since 1983 with a 15-11, 15-11 win late Saturday night over defending Class A champion Livonia Churchill.

Thirty-two teams, including four rated in the top 10 in the state, began play at 8:15 a.m. And when it finally ended around midnight, the Kicking Mules triumphantly hoisted the first-place trophy.

"Churchill had to be as tired as we were, and I tried to convince my girls that they (Churchill) were tired, too, and that we've got to get over it," said Bedford coach Jodi Manore, whose team lost to Churchill back on March 17, 1991 for the coveted state crown. "Churchill is always scrappy. They got up and blocked well, even though they're not tall team."

Tournament MVP Jennie Bringman, a Wright State (Ohio) native, and Stacey Scarbrough, an all-tourney pick bound for Miami of Ohio, carried Bedford (40-8 overall) to the title.

BUT THE MULES, who received strong play off the bench from 5-foot-10 freshman Liz Hennes, demonstrated great depth in winning the 19th annual tournament.

"We play every Saturday in tournaments because we're not in a league," Manore said. "We've been using a lot of players, so we want to give as many kids an opportunity."

"Today we had a starter out with an ankle injury, but had somebody

step into the front row and do the job."

Churchill, meanwhile, continues to amaze despite losing five of six starters from last year's state championship team.

The Chargers are a surprising 29-5 overall.

"I thought we played our best game at midnight, even though we were tired and had been there all day long," Churchill coach Mike Hughes said. "All I ask of our kids is to play to the level of their talent, and our kids played as close to that as they can play."

"We came to this tournament because we need the experience of playing against good ballclubs. I'm proud of all these kids on the way they played."

CHURCHILL SENIORS Julie Campau, outside hitter, and Ellen Letting, a middle hitter, were both named to the all-tournament team.

The Chargers also got steady play throughout the day from senior setter Kristi Syzanski, junior outside hitter Chrissy Dault and senior outside hitter Vicki Lucas.

"We had too many service errors (in the finals) and we're not quite as good this year offensively," Hughes said.

But the Chargers can play defense, just ask Livonia Stevenson, who lost a heartbreaking and emotional quarterfinal match to their city rivals, 17-15, 12-15, 12-15.

The Spartans, who went an impressive 8-0 in Pool E, received a bye into the quarterfinals while Churchill, 6-2 in Pool F behind unbeaten Flint Atherton, drew an extra elimination-round match, overcoming talented junior Stephanie Stoen and Birmingham Martin for a 15-10, 15-5 win.

Stevenson, determined to avenge a three-game loss earlier in the week to Churchill, held a 14-6 first-game advantage before the Chargers roared back for a 17-15 victory behind some late clutch hitting by Lesig, along with effective serving from Dault.

STEVENS, bolstered by the hitting of Julie Martin, the blocking of Teresa Sarao (an all-tournament pick) and the setting of Patty Dismond, bounced back from a 5-0 second-game deficit to win, 15-12, forcing a third game.

In the third and decisive game, Stevenson jumped earlier in the week to Churchill, held an advantage as Churchill reeled off 11 unanswered points.

The Spartans pulled within 14-12 thanks to some big hits from senior Lori Bailey, but Churchill held on when Campau's block (on Bailey) clinched the match.

"We do not get enough in big games from our middle hitters and it puts a strain on our defense," said Stevenson coach Lee Cagle. "I thought Julie Martin played well (in pool play) all morning, but the emotion caught up with her in the Churchill match."

"We have a glaring weakness with our blocking. It has to do with position. The ball hits below the tops of our hands and we end up getting hard ribcobs off the arms."

"Overall I thought our serving was good, but we have to eliminate the fear of mistake in serve reception."

With Stevenson out of the way, Churchill faced Dearborn, winning in three games, 15-9, 11-15, 15-6.

"THE BEST defense we played all year was against Dearborn," Hughes said. "We play blue collar defensively. When the ball is on the floor, we normally get the ball."

On the other half of the bracket, Livonia Ladywood made a strong run before losing to Flint Atherton in the quarterfinals, 15-11, 14-16, 15-8.

The Blazers received the elimination round by tying Dearborn for first place in Pool A (7-1 records each).

Ladywood then ousted Grand Rapids Forest Hills Central, 15-3, 4-15, 15-9.

"I thought we played really well," Ladywood coach Tom Teeters said. "We made some switches in our lineup and I thought Janelle Hermine's play, particularly serve reception, was strong."

And a freshman, Tara Overalls, came through off the bench. She gave some other breaks and did a good job hitting."

Other Ladywood contributions came from all-tournament pick Liz Gunn and Mary Jo Kelly, the team's top two hitters; along with Valerie Adams (serving and serve reception) and Kristy Walker (back row play).

THE AREA's hard luck team was Plymouth Salem.

The Rocks finished 6-2 in Pool C, tied with Birmingham Marian, but one game behind Bedford, which ironically lost its only game of the tournament to North Farmington.

Salem's record was 2-6, not reaching the elimination round, losing a tiebreaker. Marian won both games against the Rocks, 15-9, 15-8.

And because it was a six-team pool, Salem had a bye and never faced Bedford, the eventual tournament champ.

Others named to the all-tourney team included Suzi O'Donnell, Dearborn; Lori Wolff, Forest Hills Central; Sarah Smith, East Lake Central; Bridgette Norris, Walled Lake Central; Meg Paris and Katie Baumback, Flint Atherton.

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