



October 2, 2009

Eagles overcome Little Giants in four games

BY JEFF ARENZ

Sports writer

FREMONT -- The Fremont Ross Little Giants hung around, but the Oregon Clay Eagles proved to be too much during a nonconference volleyball match Thursday at the Purple Pit.

Clay (12-3 overall) captured a 25-23, 19-25, 25-19, 25-13 victory against Ross (5-11) during a contest that the Little Giants controlled at times during the first three games.

"We played intense in those first three games, were very consistent and very aggressive," Ross coach Randi Whitman said. "In that last game, we lost a little bit of mental focus. We need to keep our mental focus because that prevents our opponents from going on long scoring runs."

Oregon Clay coach Tracy Donnelly agreed.

"They really outplayed us in the first two games," Donnelly said. "In the third game, we used their game plan back on them (to earn a win). And then (in Game 4), I think their players started to question themselves, their confidence and they started to lose focus."

Trailing 2-1 in games, the Little Giants allowed the Eagles to go on a 10-2 run to start Game 4. It was the beginning of the end for Ross, which gave a valiant effort in attempting to upset Clay.

Christy Meggitt had 19 digs, nine kills and eight points for Ross, which received nine digs, seven kills, five points and an ace from McKenzie Schneider and five kills, four blocks and a dig from Christy Woleslagel.

But the Eagles countered with Megan Agoston, who posted a match-high 12 kills, served 10 points with one ace and added a block, and Lexi Laberdee, who turned in nine kills, eight points with three aces and a block.

Ross took a 10-6 lead in Game 1 after Woleslagel had consecutive blocks. The Little Giants maintained an edge until Marci Herr's kill tied the first game at 13 and the teams battled to a 21-all deadlock.

Kills from Schneider and Christy Meggitt handed Ross a 23-21 edge. But the Little Giants saw Game 1 slip away after a serve went long, they were called for a double-hit and Clay's Kristen Kayser served both of her aces in the match.

In Game 2, Ross led by as many as eight points (19-11) as its front row came to life. Three consecutive kills from Taylor Waggoner put the Little Giants up 14-10 before Kassi Leasure served the first of her two aces. Ross kept its momentum after Meggitt hammered down two more kills while Clay went on a short-lived rally to close the second game.

"Our girls are finally starting to realize that volleyball has a mental game besides having a power game," Whitman said. "We get up on boxes and work on hitting zones. I had hitters hitting against six blockers in the front row, telling them to get the ball around them. I think the girls are doing a better job of using their eyes and playing that mental game."

Leading 7-3 in Game 3, Ross had all of the momentum on its side. But Agoston and Lexerbee went to

work, combining for nine Clay points on eight kills and a block as the Eagles rallied for a 19-14 lead. After Ross got within three points (22-19), Laberde delivered back-to-back kills before a Little Giants' passing error put Clay ahead 2-1 in games.

"I think the biggest difference was that Fremont Ross got away what was working for them," Donnelly said. "They were scoring points on tipping and rolling before we decided to use their game plan against them. We picked up on that and, when Fremont Ross started to lose momentum, anything could happen."

Whitman said the Ross defense needs to be more effective.

"We have struggled with reading where the hit is coming from and defending against a roll or a tip shot," Whitman said. "Defensively, we're in the proper position when our opponents are hitting the ball. The hardest shots that Clay gave us, I thought, we dug up very well. But then they came back with that little slap shot, and we're not there."
