

Lineup change gives Brady a new rhythm

Written by Deb Egenberger
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Eagles take second at home invite

The Brady volleyball team was 10 matches into the season before coach Lynne Johnson made a bold move during practice last week that she'd been considering from the beginning.

She moved all-conference defensive specialist Carissa Rayburn from the libero position she's played the past two years to setter, a spot she was familiar with from junior high.

"Carissa just understands the game so well," Johnson said. "The girls all knew things weren't clicking quite right before and now they feel the difference."

Rayburn took the lead on the floor as the Eagles powered past Anselmo-Merna in the opening round of the eight-team Brady Invite 25-13, 25-21.

"The girls took care of Anselmo-Merna pretty easily in the first set," Johnson said.

Leading 21-13 in the second set, Johnson decided to substitute liberally.

When the Coyotes crawled back and tied the score 22-22, Johnson turned to her big guns for the win.

The Eagles came back in the semi-finals to defeat Maxwell 25-10, 25-22.

"Maxwell is playing much better than the first game of the year," Johnson said. "We all should be, that's the goal anyway."

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The win pushed Brady into the tournament championship against Mullen, a team the Eagles handled in straight sets two weeks earlier.

“Mullen played three or four times the game they did against us at Callaway,” Johnson said of the final match. “They put up good blocks on our middles.”

Instead of fighting through the block, the Eagles set to the outside.

“We got a little safe,” the coach said. “We were trying to hit down the line and the ball was going there, it was just going out too many times.”

Mullen took the hard-fought rematch 25-20, 20-25, 25-20.

“The flow and rhythm of our game was much better,” Johnson said, despite the loss. “We know there are still some things to work on but I’m feeling better about the flow of things.”

No statistics were available.

The Eagles (10-3) go right back to work this week with a head-to-head matchup against Wallace (3-6) on Friday and then a triangular with Medicine Valley and Maywood on Tuesday.