

Eagles win SHC title

Written by Deb Egenberger
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Brady girls improve record to 19-6

All wins are good wins, says Brady volleyball coach Lynne Johnson.

But a victory that builds character creates a lasting impression.

The Eagles had two such matches during the Sandhills Conference tournament at Stapleton last week.

After handling Stapleton-McPherson County easily in the first round 25-14, 25-17 on Oct. 16, the Eagles faced Mullen in the semi-finals.

“It was the rub match,” Johnson said, “and we had to fight pretty hard for it.”

After trading points and splitting the first two sets, Brady came back to make fairly quick work of the Broncos in the third set.

Since the semi-finals and finals were played best of five, though, Brady hadn't quite made its way into the championship.

The next two sets went back and forth again until the Eagles managed a 3-2 victory 25-20, 24-26, 25-14, 19-25, 15-8.

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In the other side of the conference bracket, Sandhills/Thedford took out top-seeded Hyannis in the semi-finals to meet Brady in the championship on Saturday.

In the meantime, though, Brady had a head-to-head matchup with Hitchcock County in between on Thursday.

“We used to play Hitchcock County on the weekend but because the boys were playing them in football, they moved it to the same night,” Johnson said.

The Falcons pushed the Eagles but Brady got the victory in three straight, 25-18 25-19, 25-22.

The Eagles carried a five-game winning streak into the SHC finals Saturday night.

“It was a different kind of ball for us,” Johnson said of the battle with the Knights. “They had some tall players that were hitting off our blocks, hitting deep and kind of flipping the ball over the net. The girls did a pretty good job of adjusting.”

Because the Sandhills/Thedford players were big but not too quick, Johnson said the Eagles shortened up the sets to gain an advantage at the net.

“They were finally playing the brain part of this game,” Johnson said. “They’ve had the fundamentals all along but now it’s kind of falling together the way it’s supposed to.”

After losing the first set to Sandhills/Thedford 22-25 the Eagles rebounded with three straight 26-24, 25-21, 25-16.

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“We had to fight hard because we weren’t passing real well,” the coach said. “It was a good character building because the girls had to dig deep and pull through the tough stuff.”

The Eagles move to 19-6 on the season and will likely be the No. 2 seed facing No. 3 Eustis-Farnam (13-9) in the first round of the D2-9 sub-district at Gothenburg on Tuesday.

Official pairings have not yet been released.

At 22-4, Bertrand takes the sub-district top seed.

The Eagles defeated Bertrand in the sub-district final last fall and went on to qualify for the state tournament.

“If we get to the finals, we’ll definitely be the underdog,” Johnson said of the sub-district. “But that’s OK with us. The girls seem to like it that way.”

Start time for Brady’s first match Tuesday is 6 p.m.