

Saints escape upset bid by Warriors

Written by Tom Fruehling

Tuesday, 01 October 2013 23:19 - Last Updated Tuesday, 01 October 2013 23:19

Even after dropping its second straight five-set match in a week, it was hard Tuesday night for Washington Coach Amy Faulkner to feel like it was a loss.

For one thing, her scrappy Warrior girls played highly ranked Xavier (No.7 in Class 4A) pretty much even-up right to the end on the Saints' home court.

"I can finally breathe now," acknowledged Xavier Coach Krista Johnson afterward.

"It was back and forth, a roller coaster, up and down for both sides. Both teams played really hard. Neither team wanted to quit.

"And both teams played to win instead of playing not to lose."

In the end, Xavier (19-7) eked out the deciding fifth game, 15-13. But for the Warriors, the outcome felt better than the loss last Tuesday against Kennedy.

After winning the first two games against Kennedy, they were at match point in the third. They lost three straight points on unforced errors, lost all momentum and lost the last three sets.

"I felt like tonight we definitely played strong all the way through," said Faulkner.

"We had some slip-ups in the fourth game when they went on a roll. But then we came right back. That last game could have gone either way."

Indeed, both teams all but refused to let the ball touch the floor in the tiebreaker set.

Saints escape upset bid by Warriors

Written by Tom Fruehling

Tuesday, 01 October 2013 23:19 - Last Updated Tuesday, 01 October 2013 23:19

"After losing the fourth set, I told the girls we were starting over like it was zero-zero," said Faulkner. "And they really turned it around. They were ready to go."

The Warriors jumped in front, 3-0. But Saints senior Kasey VandenBosch, who had 17 kills for the night, picked up four quick ones to tie the game at 6-6.

Madsy Richards, the team leader with 18 kills, put Xavier up 10-7. But Warrior Aleena Hobbs, all over the floor all night getting digs when she wasn't at the net for spikes, smashed two kills to put Washington ahead 12-11.

A serve out-of-bounds gave the Saints a break, and they put the game away on a dink shot by Britni Scholtes and one last kill by Richards.

"They're a real good team with some great blockers," Richards said of Washington (9-10). "But we were able to stay calm. And we kept playing with a lot of energy."

While star outside hitter Kayla Torson (17 kills) was dominating much of the night, as usual, it was Richards who turned the Saints' fortunes in game four.

Washington had won the first game, 25-16, with Hobbs and fellow striker Dani Franklin doing much of the damage, only to have Xavier rebound, 25-12. The Warriors took a 5-0 lead in the next game and never trailed, though Torson tied it at 23-23 on two straight kills.

Hobbs came right back with a kill of her own and then served the winning point, 25-23.

With their backs to the wall, the Saints scored 11 consecutive points in the fourth set to go ahead 19-4. In that stretch, Richards was a one-woman wrecking crew with seven kills.

Saints escape upset bid by Warriors

Written by Tom Fruehling

Tuesday, 01 October 2013 23:19 - Last Updated Tuesday, 01 October 2013 23:19

“Britni really did a great job setting me up,” said the junior outside hitter.

For her part, Scholtes (who recorded a phenomenal 52 assists and 23 digs) gave full credit to her teammates.

“I was getting really good passes so it was easy to set up the big hitters,” she said.

The Saints coasted to a 25-10 win in the fourth game, and libero Halle Heying (who led Xavier with 28 digs) said the relatively easy victory put the momentum back on their side.

“We had some great blocks at crunch time from Lizzie (Udelhoven) and Kara (Zwanziger), and that gave us some energy,” Heying said.

Faulkner said it wasn't lack of energy or heart that barely cost her girls an upset.

“I'm really proud of them,” she said. “We've got three tough conference dual matches left.

“But I think we're right where we need to be for tournament time.”