



# MENDOCINO-LAKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT NEWS RELEASE

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## EAGLES SPLIT TWO ROAD MATCHES

**Written by: Joe Langstaff**

Last Friday (11/2) and this Wednesday (11/7) the Mendocino College Eagles women's volleyball team played their final road matches of the season, traveling to Pittsburg to play the Los Medanos Mustangs and then to Napa to play the Napa Valley College Storm. Each match was a Bay Valley Conference match.

On the two road trips, the Eagles earned a split; a loss to Los Medanos and a win over Napa Valley. The Mustangs beat the Eagles in straight sets. Five days later, the Eagles topped the Storm in four sets.

The split gave the Eagles a 5-8 conference record, with one conference game to play. Their season record moved to 5-11.

That the Eagles were able to compete in the two matches was an achievement in and of itself, the Eagles losing players because of injuries and having to play the matches shorthanded.

The Los Medanos match was especially trying in that the Mustangs occupy first place in the conference and have not lost a conference game this season.

Box scores of community college games and matches are posted at the California Community College Athletic Association (CCCAA), but the stats only tell so much. To know how games and matches play out, one has to be present and observe the competition, watch a video or read or hear from someone who was at the competition.

Fortunately Eagles head coach Katherine Escobedo is one of those individuals who attends all the Eagles matches. She not only observes the matches, but teaches and trains the players in practices and coaches them during the playing of matches (also driving them to and back for away games).

Who better than the coach to provide details, observations and additional thoughts on the team's matches, in particular the away matches, far from most Eagles fans and the local press.

Throughout the season, Coach Escobedo has graciously shared her limited non-coaching and non-working time to provide additional information on the Eagles' away matches. She did so again for these two most road matches.

She provides details, information and insights on the matches, giving the reader a candid view of the matches that reveals how stoic and hardworking the mostly freshman Eagles players have been this season, especially with



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limited personnel in recent matches.

Coach Escobedo offers her comments first on the earlier match played against Los Medanos last week.

“We played that match with only 8 players. Libero Torrie Boles still hasn’t returned to play due to a concussion she received during the Yuba game on October 24. Sophomore Isabel Gutierrez was also out with a possible concussion that happened November 1.

“Not having Isabel and Torrie was tough. They are strong back row players and we were playing the best team in the conference.

“We knew Torrie wouldn’t be back, but we found out the morning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> that Isabel wouldn’t be playing. So we had to make some last minute adjustments.

“We lost all three sets. The first set was rough, 25-9. It was a warmup game. The girls were getting comfortable in their new spots. It was Jasmine Rice’s first game as the libero. She is one of our best outside hitters. We had Liana Menton start outside and Kate Bazzani played the middle.

“The second set was a lot better. The girls stepped up and fought, but still lost the set 25-17. It was a closer game, but we didn’t play to our full potential. But I was happy with the outcome regardless.

“The only thing that hurt us in that second set was our serve receive. Once we got the ball up, the rallies were long. We won a lot of those long rallies. It was really fun and exciting to watch!

“The last set was 25-14. It was a weird start. The LMC coach took his two timeouts before the game started due to spilt water on the court. It was either that or a delay-of-the- game call.

“The girls kept themselves pumped and ready. We started strong and had the lead. At one point the score was tied 11-11. I encouraged them to keep pushing and let them know once we got the lead again, the LMC coach didn’t have any timeouts left.

“Unfortunately, LMC’s middle could not be stopped. She had kill after kill. Also, their serving was on point. We had a hard time passing it up.

“The ladies played hard. I am proud of them. Most of them played different positions (than they had been playing). So it was different, but they did play those positions well.

“KJ Taylor led the team with 6 kills and Liana added 3. Jasmine led the team with 13 digs and 2 aces. Christina Wilson added 8 digs and Katie Kuehn put up 6 assists.

“It was not the best game on paper. But I was excited for the next two games; Wednesday, November 7, at Napa and Friday, November 9, our last game at home against Alameda.



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**[Special note: The Alameda match was postponed due to poor air quality caused by the Butte County fire. See more information at the end of this article.]**

“We hope to have a lot of people at our last game. It should be a good game. We beat Alameda in 5 sets at their place.”

The Eagles did play at Napa Valley on Wednesday. They won the match in four sets by scores of 19-25, 25-13, 25-19 and 25-23. How they accomplished that victory, their 5<sup>th</sup> conference win provides an interesting story.

Coach Escobedo gives her account of that match and the lead up to it. “Tuesday, November 5, was supposed to be our second-to-last practice (of the season). But the men’s basketball team had a home game. So we were unable to get into the gym.

“It kind of worried me, because I always like to do a light practice the day before a game. Unfortunately, we were unable to do so. So I decided to have the team watch the NCAA volleyball championship game for 2017; Nebraska vs. Florida.

“With Torrie and Isabel still out, we decided to adjust the rotation a little bit...again. This time we decided to try something we have never done before.

“We played 6 players all the way around, meaning nobody came in or went out of the game. Whoever played the back row also played the front row.

“The first set against Napa was rocky. Not only did we have this new rotation, but Napa did not seem to be the same team we played at home on our high school night. They have really improved!

“We lost the first set 19-25. The second set I wanted to try that same rotation again, so we did.

“The outcome was a lot better, 25-13 (for the Eagles). KJ could not be stopped the entire game. I told our setter, Katie, to keep feeding her and make them (Napa) stop her.

“They couldn’t do it. Not only did KJ have 17 kills (for the match), which is a team high, she added 7 digs, 2 aces and 2 blocks. She was a beast, not only at the net, but also from all over the court.

“The third set was a little scary. We had a good lead and then lost it. Napa came back and made the game too close for comfort. But we ended up winning the set 24-19.

“It was the same with the 4<sup>th</sup> set which was the closest set at 25-23.

“Napa had their Sophomore Night ceremonies. So they had a lot of fans there and were feeding off the energy. I love those types games, because I feel like both teams play so competitively.

“Unfortunately, our serve receive struggled a bit and once their middle hitter touched the ball we had a hard time



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getting a hand on it.

“But they (the Eagles) played hard and trusted each other. They pulled themselves out the first-set loss, which we occasionally have a hard time doing.

“It was a fun game to watch. I couldn’t sit down after the first set. Napa came to play and so did we.

Christina led the team with 8 digs and 6 aces. Jasmine added 10 kills. Katie put up 33 assists.

“I am very proud of the girls!

Coach Escobedo, in light of the great match that Taylor had against Napa, asked her to submit some additional comments on the match to be forwarded along with the coaches’ comments.

This is what Taylor had to say. “The practice before the game, we watched the Nebraska vs. Florida NCAA game. We were asked to set goals for ourselves.

“Coach Kat encouraged us all to play the best game we ever played. That stuck with me.

“Each time you touch the ball, just think ‘I want to score’ and be hungry for each point. The energy on the court was magnetic! I felt connected with all my teammates and trusted that each and every one of us could execute.

“With it being my first time playing all the way around, it definitely helped my momentum and kept my energy and intensity up for the whole game.

“Losing two of our key back row players to concussions had us a bit jumbled. But this game we pulled it together. If we don’t get a point, we just have to get the next one. That is the mindset to keep.

“We believed in each other. You could feel and see it. Going out strong in our last games. Having more experience playing together, I cannot wait to see how we dominate next year.”

**Update on the Alameda match: After being postponed on Friday, the match was rescheduled to be played on Monday, November 12 at 6 p.m., with the hope that the air quality may have improved by then.**

**Monday is a school holiday (Veteran’s Day falling on Sunday the 11<sup>th</sup>). But the volleyball match could still be played on that date or moved back to later in the week.**

**Also, the Mendocino College men’s soccer team was scheduled to play an afternoon match with Napa Valley on Friday. That was to be the Eagles’ last regular season match. That match was also postponed to Monday, with the time yet to be determined.**