

Intelligencer Journal

Knights make statement

Defending state champs sweep CV in early L-L collision

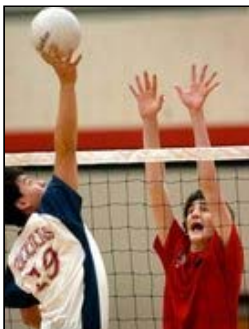
BY KEVIN FREEMAN, Intelligencer Journal Sports Writer

There cannot be a new champion until the current champion is defeated.

You can look at rosters, compare returning starters. Prognostications are made on paper.

The games are played, in this case, on the court.

The Hempfield boys' volleyball team holds the crown and while it looked a bit uneasy on the the Black Knights' heads, at the end of Tuesday night's match in Landisville, they still wore it.



Hempfield's 3-0 victory over Conestoga Valley in the Lancaster-Lebanon League Section One opener for both teams was billed as the team with three strong returnees (CV) against the team with one, albeit it very strong, returnee (Hempfield).



This Black Knights win may say more about the program than any win before it. Hempfield looks to have reloaded in lightning fashion. Their 25-17, 25-17, 25-14 win doesn't make them favorites to defend their state title but it keeps them among the league's elite in a season when some thought they would slip a little.

"It's tradition," said Hempfield coach Mike Vogel. "These guys don't want to be the team that's going to let down. They have really worked hard."

Hempfield's one major returnee is Ohio State-bound opposite Shawn Sangrey and he makes maneuvering through some growing pains a lot easier.

Sangrey recorded a game-high 10 kills and had three aces, all coming in the first game. Those serves helped the Black Knights build an 8-3 lead. Conestoga Valley's Chou Lee had a pair of aces in the first game, too, and CV cut Hempfield's lead to two, 14-12. But the Buckskins couldn't overcome seven hitting errors and four service errors.

While CV had the edge in experience, that edge was dulled by the absence of 6-foot-4 middle blocker Chris Cannon, who missed the match for personal reasons.

"The other players who say they want to play have to step up and do it," said CV coach Al Kofroth, who had to switch the team's offense. "We were scared. Some of our guys never played on a big stage with all those (state title) banners hanging on the wall."

Maybe nerves could be blamed for some of CV's miscues but Hempfield had a hand in causing many of those errors. The Black Knights served well as a team, particularly Sangrey and Jeff Stauffer, who had two aces, including one to win the match.

Hempfield extended its lead with a 4-0 then a 5-0 run in the second game. The 5-0 run gave Hempfield a 16-9 lead and was highlighted by Sangrey's fingertip dig, which resulted in Josh Mealy's kill.

"We weren't really sure how we would come out," said Hempfield setter Mike Becker. "We played well together at the (Hempfield) Joust last weekend so I figured we had a chance."

The Black Knights scored nine straight points in the third game to go up 14-5. Blocks by John Hartman and Pat Donohue, who had five blocks in the game, pushed Hempfield to the 25-14 third-game win.

"We want to make it so the ball comes back over the net to where we want the ball," said Vogel, talking about controlling the play. "We want the ball channeled to our defense or we want a free ball from which we can run our offense. That's Hempfield volleyball."

Kevin Wile and Joseph Hughes each had eight kills for the Buckskins. Hughes contributed three blocks.

"Communication and play better defense," said CV setter Wantor "Billy" Lor, when asked what the Buckskins needed to improve. "We have to run things faster because they got a lot of blocks on us."

Hempfield's goal is to get better every week. Soon, nobody will remember how many starters the Black Knights have back from last season.

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