

## **Two divisional titles for Ambassador League volleyball teams as Knights take D5 title:**

Ontario Christian: 23-25-25-25=3 (34-2 O)

Paloma Valley: 25-16-20-17=1 (26-7 O)

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For the last three seasons and four out of five years there has been an Ambassador League girls volleyball team playing on championship Saturday. It also marks a second straight year at least one team won a title as Linfield Christian won their division 7 championship earlier Saturday afternoon in Ojai. Ontario Christian made a short trip to Menifee looking for their league's second title of the day and program's first since 1987. The Knights will return home with championship hardware defeating #3 Paloma Valley 23-25, 25-16, 25-20, 25-17 in a CIF-SS division 5 girls volleyball championship matchup.

In set one Ontario Christian led 16-7 off a kill from Annaka Jorgenson. Two aces in three points from Gwendolyn Paulsen of Paloma Valley made it 16-12 Knights late in set 1. Melanie Maclin then tied it up at 18 each for the hosts. Jenna Holmes had back to back kills giving Ontario Christian a 21-19 lead. A kill from Maclin combined with a Knights ball handling error tied the set back up at 21. After a Wildcat ball handling error made it 23-22 in favor of the Knights a Gabby Hollins kill gave Paloma Valley set point leading 24-23. It only took one set point for the Wildcats to take care of business as a Knights center line violation was called awarding that set to Paloma Valley.

Bounce backs are a part of any sport and volleyball is no different. In set 2 that was the mentality as Ontario Christian bounced back to take an early 10-4 lead. Jorgenson had 3 kills while Peyton Tazelaar ,playing on her birthday weekend, and Jenna Holmes each added one. Paloma Valley had four attacking errors and an out of rotation violation in that stretch. Kills from Holmes and Riley de Groot made it 21-11 Knights. It was then Wildcat setter Olivia Karwin's turn to keep Paloma Valley in the set. She recorded two aces and a kill on setter dump in three points to bring the Wildcats deficit to 21-15. Back to back kills from Tazelaar along with a kill from Giselle Vogel closed out set two as the Knights won 25-16 and tied the match at one set apiece.

Kills from Vogel and Mikaela Cruz gave Ontario Christian a early 11-6 lead in set three. Then a Melanie Maclin attack attempt found the floor bringing Paloma Valley to a deficit of 11-7 halfway thru set two. A kill from De Groot along with back to back block solos from Jorgenson made the score 15-8 Knights. After a kill and block solo from Maclin along with a Knights attack error made the Wildcat deficit 16-12 Ontario Christian coach Paige Liebhart called a timeout. Holmes then recorded a kill as action resumed from the timeout making it 17-12 Knights. Kills from

Hollins and Madison Anderson kept Paloma Valley within four points at 19-15 and 20-16 respectively after a Jorgenson kill made it 20-15 Knights. A Channa Hart solo block plus ace from Chloe Price made it 21-18 Knights and Paloma Valley stayed three points down after a Holmes attack error at 22-19 but could make no further progress. It was actually Holmes who finished off set three with a kill at 23-19 and block solo to end it at 25-20.

Paloma Valley led 6-4 early in set 4 off of two kills each from Hollins and Hart along with a kill from Anderson. An ace from Katherine Millo and a kill by Holmes tied it at 6. Ontario Christian then took a lead at 12-9 off two kills from Vogel, an ace from Holmes and Jorgenson's kill to finish it off. There was a tie at 12 all as the Wildcats got kills from Hart and Hollins along with an ace from Anderson to even it up. A kill and solo block from Jorgenson along with Vogel's ace which made it 16-12 forced Paloma Valley coach Stephen Kaas to call his final timeout. Then a subsequent kill from Holmes made it 21-15 and back to back kills from Jorgenson closed out the match. Once the final ball landed an emotional celebration ensued in front of the Knights bench as it set in that a 31 year title drought was over.

In set 1 Paloma Valley trailed 16-7 and ended up coming back to win 25-23. Knights coach Paige Liebhart remarked when asked about the opening set loss and what she told her team said "It's a long game and there was plenty of time left...We had to keep things simple out there."

After getting knocked out in the semifinals these last two years I asked Liebhart what she was feeling as it all sunk in that the drought was over and she said "I'm just so proud of the girls and couldn't be happier for this team. They've worked so hard, especially my two seniors, four years and to lose the past two years in the semis it just feels like they've earned it."

Peyton Tazelaar won a title during her birthday weekend recording 11 kills and when asked to describe her evening the Knights coach said "Peyton got hurt earlier in the year and it's taken her awhile to get back to feeling confident and tonight she played one of her best matches of the year so far. She came thru big time as that third option we needed to spread out our offense in the middle because our outsides are so strong. I hope this is the best birthday she's ever had."

Speaking of the birthday girl (Tazelaar) she also came over and chatted with us for a bit remarking "I'm in shock and awe of what we just accomplished and the fact that it's my birthday just makes it that much more special but I would've been just as happy even if it wasn't. I'm in love with my team and we pushed thru and executed our game plan."

When asked to describe their bounce back ability Tazelaar remarked "I think that's why we won. We were able to successfully erase the bad set and go in & treat each set as its own."

Annaka Jorgenson had 22 kills on the biggest stage this section has to offer. When I asked the senior if the picture in her mind of match point matched what it actually was like and she remarked "It was definitely a lot louder than I expected. It took a second longer to realize what

we just accomplished. I was totally overwhelmed at how many people came out and supported us and that's what makes this so special, winning in front of our community, like we talked about on Thursday.”

Wildcats coach Stephen Kaas said of his team's evening “We've been slow starters all season and dropped sets to teams that maybe we shouldn't have. I was a little worried we burnt one of our lives in that first set and the adjustments we made weren't sustainable. Kudos to Ontario Christian for playing a great match.”

**Ontario Christian Noteables: Courtesy Larry Vanden Berge (Statistician)**

Annaka Jorgenson 25 kills & 2 aces

Jenna Holmes 14 kills

Peyton Tazelaar 11 kills

Giselle Vogel 7 kills, 25 assists, 2 aces

Kiley Goedhart 22 assists

**Paloma Valley Noteables:**

Channa Hart 12 kills with 1 error on 21 attempts (hitting percentage of .521%)

Gabby Hollins 11 kills

Madison Anderson 10 kills

Olivia Karwin 36 assists

Dennis Conrad Samaro shot a photo gallery as a special to Inland Sports. His photo gallery can be found here:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1n8h\\_kO4\\_V83bKkzrO0U42XfZm7ZUN5rQ?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1n8h_kO4_V83bKkzrO0U42XfZm7ZUN5rQ?usp=sharing)