

Lions go back to back behind stellar performance from Williams:

Linfield Christian (25-3 O): 25-25-22-25=3

Nordhoff (30-3 O): 18-20-25-12=1

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Eric Hawes has been coaching volleyball for a long time. But even he was impressed with the performance of senior middle blocker Paige Williams in consecutive rounds of CIF-SS division six playoff action. Last week in the semifinals Williams recorded 16 kills and a .850% hitting percentage. Flash forward one week and while she fell one kill short of her semifinal total in Saturday's championship 11 total blocks more than made up for it against a Nordhoff side looking for revenge after a championship loss one year ago. It took all of an hour and a half but the Lions repeat as division champions winning in four sets 25-18, 25-20, 22-25, 25-12.

Kills from Breanna Mitchell and Sarah Newman put Linfield Christian up 11-6 midway thru set 1. Williams had a block solo in that early stretch and the Rangers offense was stuck in neutral with four attacking errors in the first dozen points. A Linfield Christian attacking error brought Nordhoff back to a tied set at 14 forcing the Lions bench to grab their first timeout of set one. Sarah Newman, Caylan Medley, and Williams (also a solo block, one of three in the opener) had kills to put Linfield Christian back in front 18-16. From there Williams finished it off with a kill, another solo block, and ace as Linfield Christian prevailed 25-18.

Williams said "Four years ago reaching and winning back to back titles was a dream and now its one that's fulfilled. Once we get out of here I think it'll really hit that we did it. We're so motivated this year to make a big run in CIF-State and can't wait to get started."

In the second Linfield Christian ran out to a quick 4-0 lead behind two points from Williams (a kill & solo block), one kill from Mitchell, and a Rangers attacking error. Devin Clawson's kill plus a Haley Manning attack error tied it up at 4. A kill from Manning plus a ball handling error put the Lions up 12-11. From there the lead was traded through 17-17. Williams put Linfield Christian up 18-17 with a kill and the Lions stretched it to 20-17 off a Devin Sivertson ace & Ranger hitting error. It was a 25-20 win for Linfield Christian ended by Williams fifth kill of set two.

Sivertson said about the win "We thought it was kind of funny that Nordhoff was waiting for us in this round but they're a good quality team that was really young a year ago and has gotten miles better. It was definitely a tough wait to take the floor today but so worth it."

It looked like we were headed for a sweep after Linfield Christian took a 15-10 lead in set three off a Devin Sivertson ace, a combo block between Williams & Newman, and a kill from

Newman. The Lions last held a multiple point lead at 19-17 off a Medley kill. Nordhoff took the lead at 20-19 off Lauren Dingman's kill. A Newman attack error put the Rangers on set point at 24-21. While a Williams solo block staved off one set point Sasha Frazier's kill made it a 2-1 Lions lead with the 25-22 third set win.

Linfield Christian responded to their first dropped set of the postseason by starting the fourth on a 10-2 run which forced Nordhoff to burn both timeouts in set four. It was the Lions block which did most of the damage in that initial spurt accounting for five of those ten points. Williams had two solos and two assists while Manning added a solo and an assist. Mitchell, Williams, and Manning also had kills in that spurt. Medley had the final kill which set off a Linfield Christian celebration that very likely could be heard back on their campus.

Hawes remarked "Nordhoff came at us with everything they had in the third and when they do that they're a really good team. What impressed me most tonight was how we responded in the fourth set to get on a run like that and never give them a shot at getting their rhythm. Paige stepped up in an unbelievably big way these last two rounds even for her and everybody followed suit. I am so happy for these six seniors that they get to finish like this."

Lions Statistics:

Devin Sivertson>>35 assists & 4 aces

Paige Williams>> 15 kills & 11 total blocks

Sarah Newman>>9 kills

Breanna Mitchell>>15 kills & 22 digs