

Daily Breeze

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Stingrays reach new heights in volleyball

GIRLS VOLLEYBALL:

Pacific Lutheran girls first in school history to make a CIF final.

By Tony Ciniglio
Staff Writer

To think the Pacific Lutheran girls volleyball team wanted only to make it past the first round. Now the Stingrays are on the verge of capping a historic run.

Pacific Lutheran marched through the CIF Southern Section Division V-A playoffs, becoming the school's first team to reach a CIF final.

"This is huge," said Bridgette Kielhack, a sophomore who is Pacific Lutheran's only club player. "We're definitely happy to be here and we are proud of what we've done, but we really want to win. We're totally competitive."

Second-seeded Pacific Lutheran will take on unseeded Baker Valley in the final tonight at 7 at Cypress College. And this might be a match for which the entire student body of 71 students makes the trek.

"We had no inkling we'd get this far," Coach Don Bareford said. "Every one of the girls is surprised." That's because no team in the school's 14 year history had ever gone past the second round.

Pacific Lutheran is a coed Christian school located in Torrance. It leases its space from the South Bay Christian Community Church on Sepulveda Boulevard and Arlington Avenue. With no official home gym and limited athletic resources, the idea this team is making a groundbreaking run puts the postseason run in a new light.

This run caught Pacific Lutheran so off guard that it did not allocate money for travel in the Southern California Regionals. Bareford and Principal Lucas Fitzgerald decided that the final - win or lose - will be Pacific Lutheran's final match. "Overall, it's the best decision for the school," Bareford said. "Let's be proud of what we were able to do. Maybe next year will be a different story."

The Stingrays began the season ranked eighth in Division V-A. They ended the season at No. 2. "When the playoffs were announced, the girls made a pact," Bareford said. "They said, 'Let's prove CIF right.' And our run began."

Kielhack's older sister, Briana, played for North Torrance after starting her career at Pacific Lutheran. Bridgette said she is staying with the Stingrays. "I have a ton of friends here, and I love the atmosphere and the coaches," Kielhack said. Plus, the Stingrays are making history.

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Today's Match

Girls Volleyball CIF-SS Division 5-A Championship 7pm at Cypress College

Pacific Lutheran (18-5-1) vs. **Baker Valley** (21-3-1)

Mulholland League runner-up **Pacific Lutheran** had a first-round bye, then beat **Bethel Baptist**, 25-16, 25-15, 25-21, in the second round, **First Lutheran**, 26-24, 19-25, 23-25, 25-22, 15-10, in the quarter finals and **Acaciawood**, 25-16, 14-25, 25-25-16, 25-20, in the semifinals.

Hi-Lo League champion **Baker Valley** had a first-round bye, then beat **Orangewood Academy**, 25-14, 25-23, 25-18, in the second round, **Wildwood** 14-25, 25-15, 25-23, 26-24, in the quarterfinals, and **St. Monica Academy**, 25-20, 13-25, 25-19, 25-17.

Outlook: Pacific Lutheran is making it's first CIF finals appearance in any sport. Pacific Lutheran has one clup player - sophomore outside hitter Bridgette Keilhack - but Coach Don Bareford said the addition of a club player in this division is a major boon, and 6-foot-1 sophomore Chrissy Hessing will be joining go-to player Kielhack on her club team this summer. Junior middle blocker Taylor Patillo also is a viable threat. Sisters Alex Tangari (a junior) and Karina Tangari (sophomore) are Pacific Lutheran's back row stars. Jamie Jacobson is Baker's kill leader.

~Tony Ciniglio