

Volleyball team off to smashing start in 2011

By KYLE NORDEEN
Sports editor

The women's volleyball team is off to another hot start and, fingers crossed, they won't be impeded by the health issues that crippled them last season.

Following their straight-set victories over Lassen College and Laney College this past Saturday at the Ohlone College Classic, the Lady Renegades are yet to lose a set and hold an overall record of 6-0 through non-conference play.

Despite having a team of almost all underclassmen, head coach Jeremy Penaflor, has a talented and energetic squad poised to help take the program a few steps further this season.

Recruiting taller, bigger players was a main priority of Penaflor's coming into the 2011 campaign.

"Our recruiting this year was heavily based on defense, on ball control," said Penaflor.

"The other focus was to get bigger, to get taller. Trying to be a proponent of athletic kids that work hard and play hard... and take care of business in the classroom. Last year, our starting middle blocker was 5 foot, 7 inches, 5 foot, 8 inches. This year we

have two middle blockers who are 6 foot, 1 inch."

Ohlone will be without the services of a couple of key players from last year's team. Starting setter Stephanie Cao, a member of the Coast Conference North Division 2010 All-Conference team, is now enrolled at UC Santa Cruz and starting outside hitter/middle blocker Cassandra Ang now attends USC and plays for their Women's Volleyball Club team.

The team got off to a quick start last year, but critical injuries plagued the club last season and derailed their 2010 campaign. The team suffered six concussions last season — losing some players for the entire season due to recurring symptoms from the concussions — a torn MCL, and a bad high-ankle sprain.

These injuries last season resulted in having to put undersized players in positions where they were completely inexperienced just to be able to field a team to play.

"Once we hit conference, we just got bit by the injury bug. That's where everything fell apart."

"With so many people getting hurt, the environment changes, the attitudes change and the demeanor of the girls

change and it's really hard to rebound from that."

Penaflor, who has more than 12 years of coaching experience and 16 years of playing experience under his belt, assumed the head coaching position for the volleyball team in 2008 after serving as an assistant coach at San Jose State University from 2002-2006.

Each season under Penaflor's tutelage has seen the number in the wins column increase.

The six wins so far this season already surpasses last year's wins total and he doesn't plan on slowing down any time soon.

"The two years before I was here, the coach that was before me was 0-for her first year... I'm not saying that I'm a miracle worker or anything, but we're headed in the right direction and I like the group we have. We're getting better athletes every year... and it's a really cohesive unit, both on and off the court."

While success on the court is a top priority, Penaflor doesn't want the women to forget that they are student-athletes and that performing well in class is an integral part to their progress as a team and as individuals.



Photo by Kyle Nordeen

Coach Penaflor and the volleyball team have jumped out to a quick 6-0 start in their 2011 season.

"For me it was like a complete rebuilding, not just volleyball and the stuff we do on the court, but as a program in general. I want us to be known as a good, competitive team that also transfers girls academically."

"I think that was my main priority; to get girls that had

goals past college... and if volleyball turns out to be something that interests them going past what we do here, then we're going to try and find a spot for them."

The team leaves Friday to play against Consumnes River College and opens conference play against CCSF on Sept. 28.

Women's soccer holds off Butte at home

By NAVIN KRISHNAN
Staff writer

A banged-up Ohlone squad rolled the dice on Tuesday, Sep. 13 when they faced a physical Butte squad, and left with a 4-2 victory under their belts.

The first Ohlone goal came when the team's play siphoned a dominant tone for an Ohlone team that needed early scoring.

"We had a good energy from the beginning," said Ohlone head coach Larry Heslin.

"They worked hard and I thought they did do a good job. We did get that early goal with some good buildup. It was good."

The defense tightened up and the offense reloaded, scoring a second and pushing their lead to 2-0.

The second goal however, came from a free kick, which is what coach Larry Heslin said the team has really focused on.

"We've been working on that a lot in practice and, you know, it finally paid off. It was a great kick by Heidi [Moreno]."

However, Butte stayed hungry, and after a long drought, their hunger paid off.



Photo by Nicole Merrilees

Cheyenne Kisthardt plays a ball ahead in Ohlone's 4-2 win over Butte Tuesday.

"Then it started going downhill a little bit for the rest of the first half. [Butte] started creating opportunities," said Heslin, coach of the Renegades.

Butte leveled the score 2-1, meeting Ohlone's set piece goal with one of their own.

"I think we got a little comfortable with a 2-0 lead," said Heslin. "I thought at the end of the first half, we were not doing well at all."

Ohlone's lapse at the end of the first half gave their half-time break a purpose.

"We talked about picking

up the intensity and winning more of the 50-50 balls," Heslin said.

Ohlone forward Jessica Hernandez ignited an Ohlone flare that separated the second half from the play of the first half when she made dazzling midfield moves to awaken the

crowd.

With the momentum rolling, Ohlone capitalize on the liveliness of the crowd.

A blunder by the Butte keeper let the fourth Ohlone goal seep into the crevices as Butte crumbled under the setting sun.

The result came fortunately to a banged-up Ohlone team. "A win's a win," said Heslin.

The victory came against a Butte squad that, according to Heslin, is capable of winning their league annually.

"Modesto and DVC played physical, but... [Butte is] a tough team. Our girls held their composure and started to fight back...," said Heslin.

He also commented on Butte's bright future: "They will be well over .500 (winning more than 50 percent of their games).

Heslin also talked about his team's combined improvement over time, including that the team would have to peak at the right time: "There's still some work for us to do. We're pretty banged up. But we're excited."

Ohlone now stands at 3-2 and will play away against Canada College tomorrow at 4 p.m.