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Sports

Emerald Collects First Win

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Emerald's Julie Benefield, right, goes up for a block against Abbeville's Heather Richey on Tuesday during a Region 1-AA volleyball match at Westview Middle School. (Staff photo by T.M. James)

Through most of the fourth game of Tuesday's volleyball match against Abbeville High School, it looked as though Emerald would remain winless on the season.

But eight points from defeat, things changed for the Vikings.

After coach Sherri Tommie called a timeout, Emerald rallied to win Game 4 before easily winning Game 5 in a 25-19, 19-25, 22-25, 25-23, 15-8 Region 1-AA win over the Panthers at

Westview Middle School. "The last two games, we knew we wanted it," Vikings setter Amber Green said. "We just had to show who wanted it more."

After losing the second and third games, Emerald (1-6 overall, 1-3 region) was in an early 6-0 hole in Game 4 due in large part to two Heather Richey aces and two Olivia Owens blocks.

The Vikings got back in the game, closing to within three points at 10-7, but the Panthers went on a 7-0 run to take a 17-7 lead and move within eight points of a program-record fourth win for the season.

Emerald outscored the Panthers 18-6 over the rest of the game and carried that momentum into the fifth game, opening a 6-4 advantage and leading the rest of the way to clinch the first win of the season. "They decided they really wanted it," Tommie said. "They've got the heart now and

they're ready to go. "All of it's been have fun. It's a game they need to be serious about because it is a region game, but by the same token they need to go out there, have fun. They need to communicate, they need to move and they did that."

For Abbeville, there was little of that over the last game-and-a-half. Panthers mistakes let the Vikings back into Game 4 and a spate of Abbeville errors conspired to send the team to a Game 5 loss.

Tied at 4 in the fifth game, the Panthers missed two kill attempts, whiffed on two balls, and lost two points because of poor communication in falling behind 12-4 before eventually losing 15-8. "We just started falling apart," Abbeville coach Robbie Caldwell said. "They're just not moving. It was dead in here. There was no energy on the court."

After opening the year 2-1, the Panthers are now 1-5 in their last six games, including two losses in a row. Fundamentals, Caldwell said, will be emphasized in practice today before Thursday's region match against Liberty. "It looks like we're going to have to back up," Caldwell said. "I thought we had serve-receive down, I thought we had the defense down but blocking's killing us right now. We're not getting a whole lot of blocking. "We're going to work on everything because everything fell apart tonight. It just unraveled."

The feeling on the other side of the court was quite different. "It feels really good," Green said. "We've been waiting for this win. We knew we deserved it, so it feels really good."