

THE INDEX-JOURNAL

Sports

Vikings Rally to Beat B-L

By KEVIN FIORENZO/Index-Journal sports writer
Published: Tuesday, October 21, 2008 12:35 AM EDT

The Emerald High School volleyball team will miss the Class AA playoffs for the second time in three years, but that isn't stopping the Vikings from ending their season on some high points.

Playing only for pride, the Vikings came back from two games down Monday to outlast Batesburg-Leesville, 24-26, 17-25, 25-5, 25-20, 15-10, in their penultimate match of the season at Westview Middle School.

Emerald will close out its season with a home match against Walhalla at 7 p.m. today. The win Monday was just the Vikings' third this year and a rare bright moment in a disappointing season. "It's nice to get a win like this," Emerald coach Sherri Tommie said. "We're still a young team and we're not too happy about missing the playoffs, but we have a lot of good things to look forward to for next year."

Emerald's loss of the first two games Monday was somewhat surprising to the Vikings, considering they swept Batesburg-Leesville on the road earlier this season. "It feels real good to come back and get a win, especially against a team we know we should've beat," Vikings senior Amber Green said.

The Vikings turned their fortunes around with a 25-5 win in the third game that was perhaps their strongest performance all season.

After the Panthers tied the game at 3, the Vikings went on runs of seven and nine straight points won while taking 22 of the final 24 points played. "It was mostly our attitudes," said Green, who had 21 tips, 13 assists and nine spikes. "We put all our excitement into the games and it turned out a lot better."

Along with Green, Kristen Sargent had 17 spikes and 4 aces, while Julie Benefield had 16 tips and 21 assists.

Emerald also appeared to find its range on attack shots more frequently after overhitting throughout the first two games. "We played a lot more focused," Green said. "We knew what we needed to do and we knew we needed to do it quick to get the win."

Emerald led throughout the fourth game, but in the fifth game, it relinquished the lead for the first time since the second game when Batesburg-Leesville went ahead 7-6. The Vikings regained the lead and ended up winning the match when the Panthers' Breyana Hartley and Porcha Etheredge had back-to-back attack errors. "They know what they need to do and sometimes it's just communication issues, but they still work on that," Tommie said. "They pick each other up."

Batesburg-Leesville coach Tim Covington said the Panthers, who clinched a AA playoff spot last week, became too complacent after the first two games. "We just kind of stood around, and they came back and nailed us," Covington said. "We finished our region play last week, and we knew we had already made the playoffs. "I thought this would be a good warm-up game, but my girls kind of laid down."

Tommie was pleased with the Vikings' improved interaction after several points were lost in the first two games because of a lack of communication. "The girls got together, talked in huddles and decided that's what they wanted to do is pick it back up," Tommie said.

Game scores: 24-26, 17-25, 25-5, 25-20, 15-10

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

E: Abby Cannon (10 spikes, 3 digs, 3 tips, 5 assists, 1 ace, 8 points), Kristen Sargent (17 spikes, 4 tips, 1 block, 4 aces, 19 points), Stephanie Amey (6 spikes, 1 dig, 5 tips, 2 blocks, 1 assist, 3 aces, 22 points), Juhi Srivasteva (5 digs, 2 tips, 5 assists, 11 points), Julie Benefield (6 spikes, 1 dig, 16 tips, 2 blocks, 21 assists, 3 aces, 17 points), Amber Green (9 spikes, 4 digs, 21 tips, 1 block, 13 assists, 2 aces, 28 points).

Records: BL (6-9 overall); E (3-10).