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Vikes hit green monster

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Valencia swept at home to end their CIF-SS playoff run



Santa Barbara outside hitter Emily Rottman (8) and mid blocker Hadley Simons (9) attempt to block a returned save by Valencia Vikings Sydney Striff in the

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Shelby LeDuff couldn't hide her emotions. She cried in the arms of a teammate after the Valencia girls volleyball team lost in the CIF-Southern Section Division I-A quarterfinals to Santa Barbara on Monday night.

It would be the last time, LeDuff, a senior outside hitter, would play in the Vikings' gym, in the Vikings uniform, with her Vikings teammates.

"You don't come out thinking you're going to lose. Just knowing that this is the last time we will be together as a team is hard," LeDuff said. "I just wanted to win."

But Valencia came up short as the Dons swept 25-19, 25-22, 25-17. LeDuff led the Vikings attack with 16 kills while freshman defensive specialist Lindsey Lawmaster led the team with 23 digs.

Monday's match was the second time Valencia made it to the CIF quarterfinals under head coach Ray Sanchez. Valencia's last quarterfinal appearance came in 2004.

Last season, the Vikings lost in the second round to Notre Dame Academy.

Despite Monday's loss, Sanchez said he is pleased by his team's run.

"We had a great season. All you want is for your kids to play as well as they can play. I'm disappointed that we didn't pull it out but I have a lot to be proud of. We had a great game plan, we just didn't execute it."

In the first game, Valencia took an early 6-3 lead, its largest lead of the match.

The Vikings never led again.

But the Dons capitalized on the Vikings' miscues and after tying at 12.

Santa Barbara went on a scoring run and never looked back.

Once the Dons took the advantage in the second and third games, the Vikings never had a chance to catch up.

"I think we played exceptionally well," said Santa Barbara head coach John Gannon. "It was a good all-around match. We were solid on defense and if you can out-dig a team at home, then that's a good sign."

With four starters returning for next season, Sanchez said that the future is bright for the Vikings team.

"I expect to be back next year," he said.

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