

## Five games not kind this time

Valencia won its playoff opener in five frames

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Any game can turn on a moment's notice, and sometimes that's all it takes.

So it was on Thursday for Valencia girls volleyball.

After dropping the first two games to El Toro, the Vikings rallied back to force a fifth game, but a key miscue shifted the match in favor of the Chargers, who went on to win 25-19, 25-18, 22-25, 11-25, 15-7 on Thursday at El Toro in the second round of the CIF-Southern Section Division I-A playoffs.

After jumping out to a 2-0 lead in Game 5, El Toro (19-10) sent an easy return back to Valencia (20-11).

The ball slipped through the Vikings' defense and all the energy built from winning two-straight games was gone, said Valencia head coach Ray Sanchez.

"We were so confident and so ready to play," he said. "You could feel the momentum. But when that free ball hit the floor, the momentum swung to El Toro, and it never came back."

The two teams battled point-for-point through the first two games, but in Game 3, what had been near-perfect play by the Chargers began to fade away.

"Their passing broke down a little bit and it gave us an opportunity to pull that game out," Sanchez said.

It also gave senior outside hitter Katie Hank an chance to go to work, a trend that continued into the Game 4. Hank finished with 24 kills.

"Katie Hank is a tremendous ball player and we can't really replace her, not with one player," Sanchez said.

Fellow senior teammates Nicole Delange and Heidi Brown also posted strong games.

Delange finished with 12 kills, while Brown finished with 10. Valencia freshman setter Carly Carapella racked up 47 assists.

Carapella, along with juniors Emily Elias, Brooke Dawson, Brianna Earley and sophomore Sydney Striff will be back next season and will serve as a core that has the coaching staff excited, Sanchez said.

"After we were done talking to the girls, shed tears and traded hugs, the three of us — (assistant coaches David (Neeley) and Mark (Knudsen) — were outside talking. And you know, we are excited.

"We'll be a more balanced team next year, which is more how we like it," Sanchez added.