

There's no room for a trio at the top

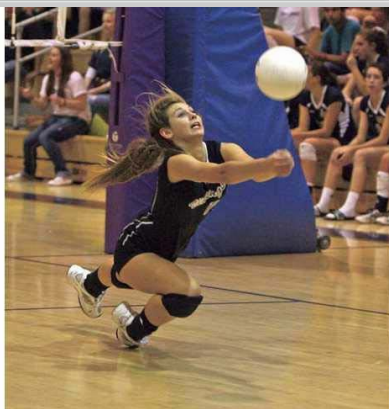
Valencia girls volleyball keeps pace with Hart in Foothill League race

By Paul Putignano

Signal Staff Writer
pputignano@the-signal.com
661-259-1234 x536

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Valencia's Carly Carapella dives to save a ball against West Ranch at Valencia High Thursday.
Francisca Rivas (The Signal)

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Entering the second cycle of Foothill League volleyball games, three teams were perched atop the standings with one loss.

Now there are two.

Thanks to 25 kills from senior outside hitter Katie Hank, including 12 in game 4 alone, Valencia handed fellow front-runner West Ranch its second straight loss with a 3-1 win on Thursday at Valencia High.

"We had to come out strong and had to be focused," Hank said. "I needed to be there for my teammates and let them know they could count on me when they needed me."

Valencia (11-8, 5-1) won by scores of 25-21, 18-25, 25-23, 25-9.

"It was one step in a four-step process," said Vikings head coach Ray Sanchez.

The win sets up a matchup between the Vikings and Hart on Tuesday at Valencia High.

The Indians beat West Ranch 3-2 on Tuesday to create the three-way tie for first place.

With the Wildcats (16-5, 4-2) off-balance most of the night, the Vikings capitalized on mistakes at the net, particularly in the first

game.

The trend appeared to continue into game 2, before the Wildcats regrouped behind the efforts of senior outside hitter Allison Summers and junior middle blocker Bree Braucher up front.

However, after a close game 3 that ended on a net infraction, the Vikings emphatically closed the door in the fourth game.

"We have a young team, and the maturity level really showed in that fourth game," said West Ranch head coach Nate Sparks. "We have to remain focused because anything can happen."

The Wildcats were called for nine net infractions throughout the match.

Summers finished with 17 kills, while Braucher and senior middle blocker Courtney Cessna each had nine kills for West Ranch. Junior libero Shelby Kunz posted 23 digs.

Sanchez credited his team's leadership for keeping the team composed, including freshman setter Carly Carapella, who was brought up to varsity following Valencia's first meeting with West Ranch.

"I've always felt like I really could help this team win," said Carapella. "I do everything I can to encourage my teammates and not get down on them, because if I do, they are more likely to make mistakes."

Carapella finished with 37 assists on the night, while senior middle blocker Nicole Delange registered 11 kills