

Vikings snatch another one

Valencia girls volleyball clinches share of eighth straight Foothill League championship with win



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It wasn't the Valencia girls volleyball team's strongest effort.

But it was enough to survive a good scare from Canyon and earn the Vikings at least a share of an eighth straight Foothill League title with a 3-1 victory on Tuesday at Canyon.

The Vikings (14-9, 8-1) won by scores of 25-21, 22-25, 25-15, 25-18.

Valencia head coach Ray Sanchez rested his starters for the first two games, and Canyon gave Valencia's

reserves all they could handle.

"I thought it would be an opportunity to rest some of our starters and give some kids an opportunity to play, but Canyon wasn't having any of it," Sanchez said.

Valencia took the first game 25-21 after a strong kill from outside hitter Sydney Striff ended a rally by Canyon.

"We made too many mistakes early, and I think that second game we just kind of fell apart," Striff said. Striff led the team with eight kills on the night.

The Cowboys began the second game with five-point rally and led the whole way, winning 25-22.

Then Sanchez put seniors Katie Hank and Nicole Delange, among others, back in the lineup, and they helped the Vikings take control.

Canyon (3-11, 1-8) wasn't ready to hand anything to the Vikings, though.

Canyon got out to an early lead in the third game, but after the Vikings answered the rally and took a 5-4 lead, they never looked back.

Valencia led 17-9 at one point before taking the third game 25-15.

The fourth game looked more like the first two, as every time Valencia would get an edge, the Cowboys kept fighting back.

Cowboys head coach Brian Ingino said he was proud the way his young team responded to its role as underdogs for much of the year, and Tuesday was no exception.

"I thought they played great and we really stepped up our game. They really wanted to come out hard tonight and play well for our two seniors," Ingino said. "This is a great group of girls, and we have seven juniors on this team."

But Tuesday's match was decidedly influenced by the play of the Vikings' seniors.

Hank had seven kills, Delange added five more and the play of the pair near the net was critical, as the Vikings' play was atypically marked by difficulty with setting.

Canyon senior Courtney Longshore, who led the team with eight kills, also made several clutch passes, but her play wasn't enough to get past the stout defensive play of the Vikings.

Sam Kaul added seven kills and four blocks, and Brittany Spackman added four kills for Canyon.

"They gave us a scare that fourth game, they really brought it," Sanchez said. "We started off slow, and I don't think we ever really got going. But they pulled out the win and I'll take it."