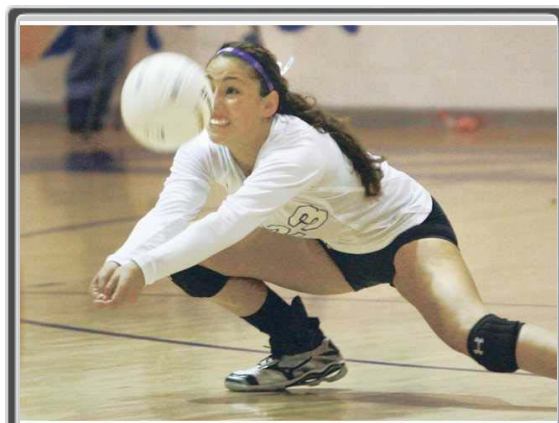


## Vikings survive

### Defending Foothill League champions defeat Saugus in five games



Valencia's Brooke Dawson digs out a ball against Saugus during their match Tuesday at Valencia High.  
**Dan Watson** (The Signal)

1 of 2 [View Larger](#)



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Valencia got everything it could handle from Saugus in a five-set match Tuesday, but the Centurions couldn't overcome their own mistakes and the Vikings won 3-2 at Valencia High.

"It was really an up-and-down match for us, that's for sure," said Valencia head coach Ray Sanchez. "Give credit to Saugus, they came to play."

Valencia won by scores of 21-25, 25-18, 16-25, 25-17 and 15-8.

Saugus (12-6, 1-2) won the first game, which seesawed back and forth with seven lead changes and a pair of timeouts before the Cents were able to win on an unforced error by Valencia.

Outside hitter Katie Hank began to make her presence known for Valencia (4-3, 2-1) during the second game.

Hank scored on a powerful block to give her team the serve, then helped her team take the lead for good and tie the match at one set apiece. But Saugus wasn't ready to give up yet.

"That third game they just jumped on us," Sanchez said. "They went on a big run and their libero scored a ton of points."

Led by several big plays by seniors Courtney Ashburn and Taylor Schubert, Saugus jumped out to a six-point lead and hung on to take the third game.

But Hank and her Viking teammates went back to work, and with the imposing outside hitter seemingly blocking everything within six feet of the net, Saugus began to feel the pressure.

"We got down and we were just telling ourselves that we need to play harder," Hank said. "We just couldn't make the same mistakes."

Unforced mistakes became Saugus' downfall as the team seemed to lose momentum at the beginning of the fourth game — just as the Vikings picked it up.

"It really came down to errors for us in the fourth and fifth games," said Saugus head coach Zach Ambrose. "That's where (our inexperience) shows through."

Hank, who led her team with 21 kills, picked up more than half of those in the final two games.

"She's a player who, moreso on this team than any other I've coached in a long time, that's always bailing us out, time after time after time," Sanchez said. "Whether it's running up points on the serve or getting a big sideout, she's been bailing us out."

Schubert, who led her team with 13 kills, six blocks and 22 digs, said the young Cents are getting better each match but can't afford to beat themselves the way they did Tuesday.

"We made four unforced errors to start the game to 15, and that's just not good," Schubert said. "You need to get out to a quick start, especially on a short game like that."

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