

Brady girls finish runner-up at SHC

Written by Deb Egenberger
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Eagles fall to SMC in finals.

THEDFORD—For two straight years, the Brady Eagles have landed in the championship game of the Sandhills Conference volleyball tournament.

They cruised into the title game this season by easily defeating Arthur County 25-9, 25-19 in the first round and then downing Cody-Kilgore 25-21, 25-17, 25-19 in the semi-finals.

“Neither team offered us a big challenge,” said Eagle coach Lynne Johnson. “It’s been a few weeks since we’ve played a tough team and I think it showed when we got to the finals.”

Stapleton/McPherson County upset No. 7 state-rated Mullen in the other half of the conference bracket to meet Brady in the finals.

“You know, they say it’s hard to beat a team three times,” Johnson said of the Cyclones, which Brady defeated twice earlier this year. “We didn’t pass well and then we got frustrated. Our setters ended up running all over the place and that meant our hits weren’t where they should be.”

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The Cyclones earned the championship trophy with a straight-set victory 25-21, 25-19, 25-19. Brady finished runner-up again.

“We simply didn’t execute,” Johnson said. “We talked about the one thing that we needed to do and that was to execute.”

With a 19-5 record, Johnson said expectations are high for her team.

“I think the girls put a lot of pressure on themselves instead of just playing and having fun. That’s when things go bad.”

This week’s games will provide the stiff challenge Johnson thinks the Eagles need to close out the regular season.

Brady played at Class D-1 state-rated Ansley Tuesday night and travels to 21-6 Hitchcock County on Friday.

“We will use the games this week to get ready for sub-districts,” Johnson said. “We need to go back to having fun.”

The D1-11 sub-district begins Monday in North Platte. Teams include Brady, Eustis-Farnam, Medicine Valley, Maxwell and Stapleton/McPherson County.

Although brackets have not been released by the Nebraska School Activities Association, Johnson expects the Eagles will be seeded first, earning a first-round bye and playing the winner of Eustis-Farnam and Medicine Valley in the semi-finals.

The sub-district final could be the fourth matchup this year between Brady and SMC.

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“I don’t have any tricks up my sleeve,” Johnson said. “We’re just going to work hard and have fun. The rest will take care of itself.”

Individual statistics for the Sandhills Conference tournament games were not available.