

Skippers drop a heartbreaker to Hendricken

By Adrienne Downing

The Bishop Hendricken boys' volleyball team is undefeated this season, but on Friday night they traveled to North Kingstown and it looked as though the Skippers were going to hand them their first loss.

"It was a tough loss because the kids really thought that they were going to win," coach Joanne Fitts said.

Both teams looked evenly matched in game one. North never trailed by more than three points and tied the game six different times.

They finally pulled ahead permanently when a Michael Fanning outside hit brought the score to 19-18. A back row attack by Dan Cahill, a tip by Fanning and a double block by Fanning and Dan Tisser accounted for three of the final six points and gave the Skippers the



Skippers rise up in attempt to take a win from the Hendricken Hawks at last week's game. Photo by Adrienne Downing

win in game one.

Game two started solid, with Mike Bessette scoring three straight blocking points for the Skippers. Hendricken was not having success with their jump serve early on, but started to hit their

mark half way through the game and jumped to a 19-14 lead over the Skippers. NK was able to pull within two points, but a Hendricken timeout allowed the Hawks to ice a Skipper run and take game two, 25-20 to even the match 1-1.

Fitts said two things her team is working on are to improve on passing and serve receiving. The Skippers struggled to communicate with each other in game three and quickly found themselves down by eight points.

"We have the ability to pass, but it is a concentration issue. Passing is an attitude, actually," the coach said. "We were having difficulty receiving the serve so then we would have to rely on a good dig to get us out of it."

The Skippers were unable to overcome the deficit and lost game three 25-17.

The fourth game of the contest was where the home team's strengths really shined.

"We have a powerful offense and are really strong in blocking and hitting this year, and that is what we did well in game four," Fitts said.

The Skippers scored early and often and even a Hendricken timeout with the score 8-1 could not stop North's rally. Aaron Hall-Stinson hit two consecutive spikes,

which eluded Hendricken blockers and North cruised to a 25-14 win.

"We really had the momentum going and the kids played well," Fitts said. "When we play like that we can beat anybody."

Communication problems once again plagued the Skippers early in game five. Jeff Siatti made one save when the Skippers were down 6-1, but a mishandled ball cost the Skippers the point.

They were able to rally, but the effort came too late in the short game.

"We sort of lost our brains at the beginning of that game and our emotion went the other way," Fitts said, adding, "You can't afford to do that in a 15-point game."

The coach said that after the loss, practices have centered around passing and serve receiving and she sees improvement already.

Junior Jon-Michael Degidio, a Jamestown resident and last year's junior varsity captain, received praise from the coach.

"JM is a great kid and he has such a good attitude," she said, adding, "It is hard for the juniors this year because they work hard all week at practice and don't always get a lot of playing time because we have six seniors on the team, but he always gives his all no matter what."

The team is currently 8-5 and in a three-way tie for third place with East Providence and Charliho.

"Despite a couple of tough losses, we have had a really good season. Our focus over the next three weeks is to strengthen those areas that need it and get ready for the playoffs," Fitts concluded. "The kids are really starting to believe that they can go all the way and I think we are peaking at the right time."

They will host Cranston East at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, May 14, and travel to Cranston West on Wednesday, May 16, at 6:30 p.m.



Hanna Geib, at right, encourages fellow second-grader Emily Tiexiera in the Melrose school Kentucky Derby. Photo by Adrienne Downing

Island kids catch derby fever

By Adrienne Downing

The rest of the nation had to wait until Saturday for the Kentucky Derby, but the students at Melrose Avenue School were able to have their own derby on Friday thanks to gym teacher Joe Ucci.

Ucci started the derby four years ago as a fun activity for the kids.

"The first year we did it, the weather was cold and rainy but for the last few years it has been very nice and the kids have had a great time," Ucci said.

He sets the course up on the Lawn Avenue field, and organizes the children by grade and gender.

"We have first grade boys run against first grade boys and girls against girls, and we go like that from grade to grade," Ucci said.

Winning is not emphasized as much as sportsmanship and having a good time.

Although there are no official awards, second grader Hanna Geib would have won the sportsmanship award for her kindness to her

classmate.

Emily Tiexiera was still making her way around the course when many her classmates had returned to their places in line after the race. Someone in the crowd started a cheer of "Emily, Emily" and Geib ran across the course, took Emily by the hand and raced by her side to the finish line.

Her gesture sparked a similar circumstance in the fourth grade race that followed.

When all the students had finished racing, Ucci offered a challenge to the teachers to participate. The crowd cheered in delight and chanted the names of their favorite teachers as the faculty moved into position at the starting line.

All of the teachers put in a good show, but in the end first grade teacher Kelly Speck managed to hold off Ucci for the win.

"I think it is a great thing for the kids and it really is so cute when the whole school is together," principal Kathy Almanzor said.



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