



# MENDOCINO-LAKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT NEWS RELEASE

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## **EAGLES WIN FIVE-SET MARATHON MATCH OVER LANEY**

**Written by: Joe Langstaff**

This past Wednesday it was a battle of Eagles, as the Mendocino College Eagles Volleyball Team hosted the Laney College Eagles in a Bay Valley Conference match.

This match had all the makings of one that would be quite competitive. Each team was still looking for its first win on the season. Mendocino's record was 0-9-1, while Laney, who had played no pre-conference matches, came into this match with an 0-3 record. The winner of this match would earn that elusive first win.

The match proved to be as competitive as expected, and then some. It went to five sets, with Mendocino clinching the victory with a dramatic 19-17 win of the fifth set.

An issue for both teams this season has been roster size. Initially, Mendocino started the season with eight players. Because of injuries they have had to play several of their recent matches with just the minimum six players. Friday's match was another example, with star player sophomore Aliza Atkins still sidelined with an ankle injury suffered in the Alameda match.

Laney also had just six players available for Friday's match. They had probably played no pre-conference matches because of a lack of players. The six players they put on the floor for Wednesday's match were the same group that had played in their three previous matches.

For Mendocino, the six players available for Wednesday's match were freshman defensive specialists Regan Wyatt, Isabel Gutierrez, and Katelyn Lieding, freshmen outside hitters Rylie Loflin and Kami Swinney and sophomore setter Lily Mendoza.

This match would be a classic six-on-six affair.

Because of the lack of substitutes, Mendocino's three defensive specialists also saw more time up by the net and were able to contribute offensively and score points. Mendoza also scored some points.

The first set saw the two teams tied 4-4 in the early going. But Mendocino got on a run keyed by aces by Wyatt and Lieding to go up 8-5. Laney called a timeout.

But a tip kill by Loflin kept the momentum going, with Mendocino increasing the lead to 11-6 and eventually extended it 16-10. It looked like Mendocino had taken charge and were well on their way to winning the first set.



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But that was not the way things would be in this match, for either team. Laney made a 4-point run which brought a Mendocino timeout. But Laney kept chipping away finally tying the score at 17-17.

Mendocino answered with two points, but Laney made a run of 4 points that put the score at 21-19 in Laney's favor. Laney's Kalina White, who would prove to be their best server in the match, had three consecutive aces in the run.

Continuing what would be the match-long trend, Mendocino, after a time out put together a 3-point run to go back ahead 22-21, with Laney calling the timeout.

Laney tied the score and then went ahead 23-22 on a "pop fly" serve that fell untouched between Mendocino's front and back line. But the next serve went into the net tying the score at 23.

Laney secured the set win with first a cross-court kill, followed by an ace for a final score of 25-23.

In set two, it was Mendocino again taking the early lead, this time 8-3, featuring a kill and block by Swinney. But as would be the norm for the match, Laney rallied back to take a 10-9 lead, featuring another 3-ace streak by White.

A block by Wyatt after a Mendocino timeout tied the set at 10-10. Several ties followed at 12, 14, 15, 16, and 17 points. Then Laney held a slim lead for several points and looked like they be on the way to a 2-0 set advantage in the match.

After an Eagles' timeout when the score reached 21-18 in Laney's favor, the Eagles chipped the lead to two points. But White got her turn at service again and dealt two more aces and had Laney looking at set point with the score 24-19.

Things looked bleak for Mendocino. But a Laney hit out of bounds gave the Eagles a point and the serve, with Wyatt serving. A Liding kill and then a two-hits call on Laney cut the lead to 24-22 with Laney calling a timeout.

When play resumed the Eagles closed to within a point on a back-to-the-net-over-the-shoulder kill shot by Mendoza. A Laney hit out of bounds tied the score at 24. A Loflin tip kill gave Mendocino the lead.

A Mendocino hit into the net tied the set at 25, but another Loflin tip kill put the Eagles back on top. They won the set 27-25 and tied the match 1-1 when an attempted Laney kill shot sailed past the end line.

Set three started true to form, being another nail biter. Mendocino had slim early leads, but Laney tied the set at 8-8 and had two 1-point leads. But Mendocino countered to go up 13-10.

That lead was short-lived, with Laney tying the set at 15-15 and Mendocino calling a timeout.

Mendocino took a slim leads of 1 to 2 points and held a lead until Laney tied the set at 20 and then went up by two on three straight aces by Kaleena Ugaitafa. Mendocino called another timeout.



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Mendocino fought back to pull within 1 point at 23-22, but two consecutive mishits gave Laney the set 25-22.

Things looked a bit bleak for Mendocino when Laney took a 6-3 lead in set 4, looking like they might be on their way to closing out the match. Mendocino called a timeout.

With help of a string of Laney errors, Mendocino rallied back and tied the score at 7 and then at 8. A Laney hit out of bounds, followed by consecutive aces by Loflin gave the Eagles a 11-8 lead, with Laney calling a timeout.

Unlike the previous timeouts in the match, this timeout turned out not to be the momentum changer that Laney was hoping for.

Loflin continued a great service run, getting two more aces. Swinney added an ace. Mendocino's lead grew to 17-9. An ace by Gutierrez made the score 20-12, with Laney calling another timeout.

The lead was 23-13 after a stretch where Swinney contributed 3 kills. Laney managed to cut the lead to 8 points. But a hit out of bounds sealed the 26-16 set win for Mendocino.

The match was now tied 2-2, sending it to a tie-breaking fifth set where a match win could be had by the team who first reached 15 points with at least a 2-point lead. If the lead was not the requisite 2 points, the match would continue until one of the teams went ahead by two points. Naturally, the teams took the more difficult route.

It's a wonder that any of the spectators at the match had any nails left to bite after the fifth set had been played.

It opened with yet another Swinney kill. A bit later, a tip kill by Loflin put Mendocino up 5-3. But Laney rallied to go up 6-5, with Mendocino calling a timeout.

A tip kill by Lieding, followed by a Loflin kill and then a Wyatt ace had Mendocino up by two at 8-6. The teams switched sides of the net.

It was Laney's turn to punch back. A tip kill followed by an ace, sandwiched around an Eagles' hit out of bounds, had Laney back ahead 9-8. But then they hit a ball into the net to tie the score 9-9.

Errors by each team moved the score to 10-10. Consecutive Laney kills had them up 12-10, with Mendocino calling a timeout.

When play resumed, a Gutierrez kill, followed by a Swinney kill tied the set at 12. A Laney hit out of bounds put Mendocino up 13-12, with Laney calling a timeout.

A Laney tip kill tied the score at 13-13. A Swinney kill put Mendocino one point away from a set and match win. But a four-hits call on Mendocino tied the score at 14 all. 15 points would not be enough to win the set.

Mendocino took a 15-14 lead on a kill off a dig by Gutierrez, but a Laney kill tied the score at 15.



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Mendocino went up 16-15 on another Swinney kill, but Laney answered again with a kill to tie at 16.

It was Laney claiming a 17-16 lead when the Eagles could not get the ball back over the net. But Mendocino retied at 17 when Wyatt executed an over-the-shoulder-dig, with Laney unable to get the ball back over the net.

With Wyatt serving, Laney was charged with a 2-hit call, putting Mendocino up 18-17.

The hard-fought match finally ended when Laney hit a ball into the net, giving Mendocino a 19-17 set win and a 3-2 match win.

No doubt it was a relief for the Mendocino players, their coaches (head coach Billy Offill and assistant coach Kahli Remy) and their fans to finally get that first win under their belts.

Coach Offill was extremely pleased with his team's effort, pulling out a win without their star player. "Aliza has been our big banger for two years. So to have her out and injured and still pull out a win was big for us. It's huge.

"When you have a really good player go down and you get a win, you gain some confidence. Then, when that player is back in the lineup, you hope some other players are better than they were before she went down.

"The ladies have been working hard every day. They didn't quit tonight. There were a couple times when we got to match point and kept battling and fighting. Kami really had a good game. She probably had 20 kills.

"Katie Lieding comes out there and goes all over the place and gets a bunch of digs, keeps a bunch of balls alive and gets a couple kills.

"We got stuff going in the middle. Just a great effort. We had to get that first win out of the way. Now we can take a deep breath and go get so more (wins).

"It was gutty effort all around from all six players. We had no subs tonight. Everybody is playing every spot in the rotation. Everybody contributed and did their part. It's great to win in five sets.

"We went to five with Napa, who's a pretty good team. We had Aliza for that match. So to be in that position again being at home and a little further down the season, that's kind of what the season, the journey is about. It's a nice win for the ladies and they can enjoy it. I'm really proud of their effort. They did a great job."

The Eagles' conference match scheduled at Solano College on September 29 was postponed to an unspecified later date. The Eagles have a bye this coming Wednesday. They play their next match next Friday, October 6, at home, vs. College of Marin, match time 6 p.m.