

SPORTS

'That was my team out there'

Despite crushing loss, volleyball team basks in glory of great season

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Fans' screams amplified through the entire gym. Wando trailed by six points. The will to keep fighting for every point was there -- no matter what the score was.

They couldn't give up. Dorman had one more point to win it all. Their defense was tiring.

Wando still had a chance.

And then it was over.

Dorman High School took the State Championship title for the second year in a row with a 3-1 win on Nov. 4.

Surrounded by masses of their opponents and their supporters, Wando girls smiled and congratulated the winners.

Both teams gave great fights at Chapin High School -- unfamiliar battlegrounds for the players -- but it was Dorman that achieved the advantage.

"I think Dorman just showed up ready to play, and unfortunately we were not," captain Keeghan Andrews said. "They're a good team, and they were ready to fight for the State Championship."

With a bleacher full of students all from Dorman, their chants pounded into Wando players' heads.

It was a mind game that Dorman ultimately won that sophomore Grae Gosnell recognized.

"They had a lot more people cheering for them, I guess that kind of got in our heads," Gosnell said.

The first two sets Wando lost. The intensity of Dorman's team was exemplified by their star player, Thayer Hall.

Six foot three.

Great defensive tactics.

One powerful strike.

An All-American player.

Thayer drew her team together to work in sync.

Coach Alexis Glover -- the girls' volleyball coach for the past 31 years -- saw the disadvantage they had from such a skilled player. But she knew that there was still an opportunity to win.

"(Thayer Hall) has played at the Pan-American Cup. She wears USA colors, and plays



Seniors **Brooke Medders, Karen Majewski, Lexi Hellberg** and **Keeghan Andrews** and junior **Abbey Schad** receiving a serve during their championship match against Dorman on Nov. 4. *photo // Carly Knight-Carrier*

on the United States' National Team that travels all over the world and you know, she's just a one-girl show," Glover said. "You know, we knew it was going to be one or two scenarios: either she was just gonna come out, light it up, and we wouldn't be able to stop it. Or if we could drag it out five sets, I felt like we could of had a better opportunity because she might have gotten tired and made mistakes."

And at the fourth set, Dorman won. But Glover couldn't be more proud of the progress they made in the game -- a difficult one as well with accompanying roadblocks.

"My favorite part of the game was when we won the third set. That was my team out there, that was my team that I have been practicing with. And actually the second set I was pretty happy, happy the way we played the second set and I just felt like that referee call was kind of bad," Glover said. "You know if that call had been correct, and he called it out like he should have, then we would have had the ball and 24 points serving into game point. It makes a difference."

Even though it was the last high school game for seniors, the girls knew this wouldn't be the last time volleyball would be in their lives. Five seniors on this year's team are committed to the sport they have put every bit of effort into.

It's not everyday that you hear that the players are committed to colleges, but that the two managers of the team as well -- Drayton Green to University of North Greenville, and Kaleb Jenness at Ball State University.

Andrews is heading off to Syracuse University in two months.

Brooke Medders is going to Jacksonville.

And fellow senior and captain Lexi Hellberg is committed to New York University.

She shares an enthusiasm that all five of them look forward to in the future.

"I am beyond excited to play volleyball in college. I'm really looking forward to meeting new people and having a new team to work with

and get to know," Hellberg said.

And while seniors look to the future, Gosnell looks as well.

"Next season is going to be tough, we have all our seniors leaving. All of them -- gone. We're losing all of our starting lineup," Gosnell said. "We have different people filling in different positions that they've probably never played before, or if they have played before they're going to have to make an adjustment. Next year Dorman is also losing their seniors, so we have no idea what next year brings."

As well as next season's preparation, Gosnell has something else to look forward.

"I'm playing for USA (National Team) right now... but I'm only a sophomore so I still got a long way to go," Gosnell said. "Dec. 17 to Colorado Springs -- the Olympic training center to train so I'm really excited about that."

The sport is also an outlet for many of these girls. Friends, family, relationships, school -- it all ties into the volleyball. It's the incredible connections that will make leaving the Wando sport even harder.

Not only hard for the players.

But for the person who has guided them all these years and will continue to do in the future.

The coach.

Coach Glover is losing a part of her family -- her girls and boys, some of which have been with her all four years.

It's tough.

But she knows they're ready.

"I wish them the best of luck and I wish for them to get even better and to enjoy college. You know you only have one time to be in college to have fun and enjoy your sport, and to be a leader out there like they were for our team here and at show everybody that we play really good volleyball in South Carolina," Glover said. "I wish that they are proud of where they're from and the tradition that you built at this school and the games that you've won and the trophies you've brought home."

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Keeghan Andrews