

FRIDAY: First and Second Round Play-off Coverage

The egg McMuffin game is difficult.

Almost all teams practice after school, and players are unaccustomed to early starts. Friday's early matches illustrated this truth. A first serve reception into the wall, a spike goes long, a net touch; yet, the teams' rhythms return, and a plethora of skills are on display. MEI had an early 10-5 start. Katelyn Mireau and Makayla Friesen and back-to-back kills. The Bitter sisters, Marissa and Jolene, were solid as setter and libero. Holy Cross tried to hit around the wall, but struggled to find the court. At 19-9 Coach Green called a time-out to reorganize his team, and #11 Captain Kaida Fujimura and #9 Jianna Dela Cruz made great tips over the tall MEI block. The Eagles went on to a 25-16 win.

In set 2 the Crusader's woes continued as MEI raced out to a 12-4 lead. Holy Cross used momentum gained by some Eagle's errors to lead 21-20. MEI's Coach Buddee took a time-out, settled her rattled charges, and on the court the team's front block held the ground and closed out the game 25-22. Holy Cross was deflated after coming so close to the win. The third set saw MEI cruise to a 25-9 win as every attack they made was well-executed. The atmosphere was peppy with the MEI Screaming Eagles Marching Band playing between sets and during time outs.

At the high school gym Pool C's #2 Brentwood College played Pool B's #3 Archbishop Carney. Brentwood took sets 1 and 2: 25-19 and 25-23. Carney wasn't going down easily though as set 3 saw AC's #4 Gabrielle Faford carry the team to an early 8-5 lead. Brentwood pushed back and took a 14-10 lead which they gave up as Carney went up 16-14. Left handed Sarah Powell served well and the POCO Catholic School went up 19-16. Brentwood tied the score at 22. Then the infamous MEI Gym curtain hurt Brentwood several crucial times as Carney took a 28-26 victory. In the tight fourth set Brentwood finished the match 25-21.

Langley Fundamental, as the fourth seed, were the only pool winner to not get a bye. In the first set the potential Cinderella simply over-matched

Richmond's MacNeill Ravens 25-11. Fundy's setter, Ella Dolphin was singled out for praise by Coach Magnowski after the first set for running an efficient offense. Dolphin not only distributed the ball to her talented hitters, but she had several service aces. MacNeill's Shila Rasoul provided one of the Ravens few offensive bright spots with several kills in the middle. Fundy finished the match fast with 25-11 and 25-10 scores in the second and third sets.

The early afternoon atmosphere at MEI's gym is duplicated at other tournament sites. There are teams nervously awaiting the next game, teams snaking and chatting about the game just completed, parents who are bewildered about the sport they are watching, but who are there to support the children they love, and there are students freed from classes, or who volunteered to help run the tournament as table officials and lines people – students who provide the life blood of events like these. It is a picture of community, of hospitality, and of our culture. May this positive aspect of school continue.

The Mulgrave Titans are at the AA Provincials for the first time and they had two goals: beat rival WPGA in pool play, and advance to the championship round. On Thursday the Titans accomplished the first goal in 3 sets. Mulgrave squeaked out a 25-23 win in the first set as they took advantage of D.P. Todd's passing errors. In the second set Todd won 25-21. Mulgrave's match-up of Eva Ruse on Todd's Black was crucial. D.P. Todd's left-side star hits the ball like a university player. Mulgrave also focused on the two favourite areas of the ace hitter. These defensive alignments neutralized the



West Point Grey's Sophia Grant(11) getting the ball over the net against SMUS in the early match.

Trojan attack and Mulgrave looked like they were having fun and peaking. What a lethal combo. The final two sets were 25-14 and 25-22 for Coach Ruse's squad and their second goal was achieved.

Day Two Afternoon

The quarter finals began with three East Valley zone teams on the top half of the draw and four Vancouver Sea to Sky zone teams on the bottom half. Thus the Vancouver Sea to Sky zone will be guaranteed a finalist.

Host MEI played cross-town rivals Abbotsford Christian in front of a good crowd. Since MEI had played Holy Cross to get into the quarters, their jitters were gone and they moved out to a quick lead as they controlled the net. The Eagles led until ACS took a 22-21 lead. MEI responded and turned the tables taking

the next three points for a 24-22 lead as they pushed the Knights to the edge. The Knights, realizing what was at stake, scored four straight to emerge with a first set 26-24 win. Meghan Vaags crushed a cross court so hard it knocked a chair over after it hit inside the court. The East Abby school went on to win 25-18 and 25-11.

In the second quarter final match East Valley rep Langley

Fundamental and Vancouver Island finalist Brentwood College play a long five set match. The Islanders prevailed 22-25, 26-24, 25-21, 15-25, and 15-11.

Fundy, a Cinderella team, stormed to a 7-3 lead in set one. At 9-4 Brentwood's coach, Jill Fougner, took a time out to settle her team. Fundy's roll continued to 12-5. Brentwood had difficulty passing as Ella Dolphin and Grace Jerome made strong serves. Sophie Horn ended a 10-6 Fundy run with two cut shots. However, Fundy's Magnowski with a cross shot of her own gave the Titans a 20-18 lead and they ended on top 25-22.

Brentwood's Ella Wendhardt opened set two with four powerful serves. Jocelyn Lenarcic continued the barrage as Brentwood went up 9-2. Fundy took the lead at 20-19 and everything was going their way. Brentwood then tied it at 23, but Fundy's Leiding pushed it to 24-23 when Sophie Horn on a cross court smash tied it at 24. Brentwood was a point away from going down 2-0, but after the kill they scored the final two to take set two 26-24. Wendhardt pounded the serve



Abby Christian block is too much for the MEI Eagles in a quarter final match.

creating passing errors to roar out to a 7-1 lead as Fundy was still stunned after losing set two. Brentwood dominated the net and were up 21-13 with Horn hammering down the line. Horn tipped the ball over the tall Fundy block to win set three 25-21. Now it was Langley's turn to take control. Desperation was on the Fundy player's faces, and Brentwood was tight and made unforced errors. Fundy crushed their Island opponents 25-15. In set five Brentwood hung on after a short service run to win the match and a place in the semis 15-11.

In the Middle School gym Notre Dame had a close game with West Point Grey Academy in the first set 25-21, but then they ran roughshod over their Vancouver rivals taking them out in three sets. All six Juggler starters played like they belonged on the all-star team with #11 Ella Ungemach staking an early claim to the MVP award. Notre Dame will play York House in the semi finals.

York House had a straight set win over Mulgrave, but it wasn't easy. The Tigers rode Chloe Ng's setting, serving and blocking to an early lead. She also ended

the match with a dump into the undefended circle of Titans as York House took it 25-19. Mulgrave adjusted their line-up for set two while York House stood pat. Controversy broke out in the set as York House's coach disputed a referee's ruling over masks on the bench. A red card was given, and the point led to a Mulgrave 9-8 lead. Mia Ruse was dominate with hard serves and backrow attacks and gave the Titans a 21-18 lead. However, they could only manage two more points as the Tigers completed their come back 25-23 to take a stranglehold on the match. In set three York House trailed until it was 18-17. They reeled off 7 of the next ten points to finish 25-20. A berth in the final four was theirs.

The top three seeds have advanced to the semis with Brentwood College carrying the underdog banner with them. The semi finals begin at 11:00am. The championship game will start at 4:10pm.