

Marion bumped off by Lewis Central

Written by Tom Fruehling

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As Marion senior Olivia Frazier put it, the Indians' volleyball state tournament first round match with Lewis Central on Tuesday night was a "roller coaster."

First up, then down. Up and down.

But it ended on the downside.

The Class 4A sixth-ranked Titans of Council Bluffs peaked when it mattered, prevailing 15-10 in the fifth set, to oust fourth-ranked Marion in the last match of opening day at the U.S. Cellular Center.

It started out so well, too.

With big twin hitters Frazier and junior Isabella Sade pounding down kills almost at will (six and four, respectively), the Indians took the first game with relative ease 25-13.

"We came out really pumped up," senior Kaela Halvorson said. "We definitely had all of our adrenaline."

The spunky youngsters from Lewis Central (33-5), who had beaten three top-ranked teams over the course of the season, came back strong, however.

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Showing much more aggressiveness, they took an early 6-2 lead and withstood a late Indians rally to win the second set 25-22.

“Maybe it was too easy at the start,” said veteran Marion coach Roxanne Paulsen.

“Sometimes that happens. You get to thinking it’s too easy and you let up. You coast a little bit, and the other team gains momentum.”

Neither side could pull away in the third set, which went back and forth much of the way.

Indian senior Alyssa Thomas slammed a missile to put her team up 20-19, but that was the last point made as Council Bluffs ran off six straight for a 25-20 victory.

But then Marion’s ride took a sharp upswing.



With savvy junior libero Tanea Westhoff serving, the Indians took flight on a 14-0 run to go ahead 15-1. Westhoff scored two aces in the spurt, Sade had six kills and Halvorson two.

“We needed to get back, and we did a good job,” Frazier said. “But we weren’t really consistent all night. They came back and that sort of messed with us mentally.”

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Indeed, the Titans rallied to make a game of what looked to be a rout and closed to within 22-18.

“Again, it might have seemed to easy,” Paulsen noted. “For awhile, everything clicks. And the next thing you know, you’re back on your heels.”

Sade and Thomas did get consecutive kills to close out a 25-18 Marion victory.

“But that game was a turning point,” Halvorson said. “They got the momentum.”

Lewis Central never trailed in the tie-breaking fifth set, although the Indians did knot it up at 9-9. After a time-out, the Titans outscored Marion 6-1 to move into the semifinals.

“Both teams were scrappy,” Halvorson said. “But I think they were just a little scrappier.”

Sade recorded 20 kills to lead the Indians, while Frazier notched 14. Sophomore setter Caitlyn Smith had 49 assists and Westhoff 17 digs.

Paulsen credited Lewis Central for playing tough when it had to, but said her own team made too many hitting errors and missed serves at crucial times.

“It just wasn’t our night tonight,” she said. “But we had a great season.”

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“We beat some great teams this year. I hope the girls keep those good memories from our season.”

Marion finished with a 31-9. record.

Lewis Central will play West Delaware in the semifinals Thursday. Harlan will face Sioux City Heelan in the other semifinal.