

Young Warriors clipped by No. 1 IC West

Written by Tom Fruehling

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The outcome was as expected.

With a decisive 3-0 win over Cedar Rapids Washington Wednesday night in the Jefferson gym, the top-ranked and defending 4A champion Iowa City West girls advanced to their fourth straight state volleyball tournament.

For the Warrior women, who haven't been to state since 1994, losing in the regional finals is a harbinger that they're getting closer to the magic circle.

Under turnaround Coach Kari Lombardi, Washington finished its season at 20-18. Last year the team won only seven matches and Lombardi said there are much brighter days ahead.

"We're a very young team," she said following Wednesday's loss. "We're playing with three sophomores and three juniors, and our two seniors are defensive players.

"We made huge advances this year. I'm really proud of the girls' efforts."

As usual, the youngsters led the way in the match with Iowa City West. Sophomore Danielle Franklin posted seven kills and classmate Kelli Walters added seven. Junior Hanna Reese provided 22 assists. Senior Jessica Erb, who holds Washington's record for most digs in a season, added 11 more in her last game.

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Winning is old hat for veteran Women of Troy Coach Kathy Bresnahan. And she says Washington is on the right track.

"They pushed us twice this year," she said after her squad pushed its own season mark to 36-6. "They're young, and they're only going to get better."

For Bresnahan, it's been a roller-coaster year haunted by tragedy. In August, team captain and inspirational leader Caroline Found was killed in a moped accident just down the street from the school campus.

Even though her team has been ranked No. 1 for most of the season, the coach says they've yet to play at their highest level.

"At times we've played the way we should be playing. But at other times we haven't played with energy and haven't played with heart.

"It's been hard. These are 17-year-old girls, and there are things that trigger the loss of Caroline. They're up and down."

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