



Good News GCHS Volleyball

Cleveland continues winning Streak, advances to second round

By MARC RAIMONDI Posted: November 12, 2010

Anna Dawidowska traces her team's turnaround back to Oct. 3. At the time, Grover Cleveland was winless in four league matches. But that day at the Seward Park tournament, the Tigers took a set off Stuyvesant, one of the top teams in the PSAL.

"It was like, 'Oh wait a minute, we can play,'" the first-year coach said. "I think they started believing in themselves. I think they got tired of losing. It was like, 'enough is enough.' I'm definitely not easy or nice about a loss, either."

Cleveland hasn't lost a PSAL match since.

After winning six in a row to earn a playoff berth, the 18th-seeded Tigers knocked off No. 15 Secondary School for Law, Journalism and Research, 25-21, 25-20, in the PSAL Class A girls volleyball first round Friday in Park Slope. Cleveland will travel to second-seeded Cardozo for the second round on Monday.

"I think they just finally got it," Dawidowska said. "For most of them it's the first time in their life that they played a system. It just kind of clicked. They believed in it."

The coach, who starred at Christ the King and St. Francis College, took over the boys program in the spring and earned a playoff berth. Before the girls season, the school's principal asked her if there would be similar expectations for the girls.

"I said, 'Oh this is gonna be the tough one,'" Dawidowska said. "I just didn't see it. They were so inexperienced. The things I was saying were like a foreign language. This was like volleyball 101 for like two months."

Cleveland (7-4) was fortunate to have junior Carolina Alfonso Reyes, who immigrated to Brooklyn from the Dominican Republic last year. The outside hitter is a star; she played junior national team level volleyball in her native country and has brought those kills with her.

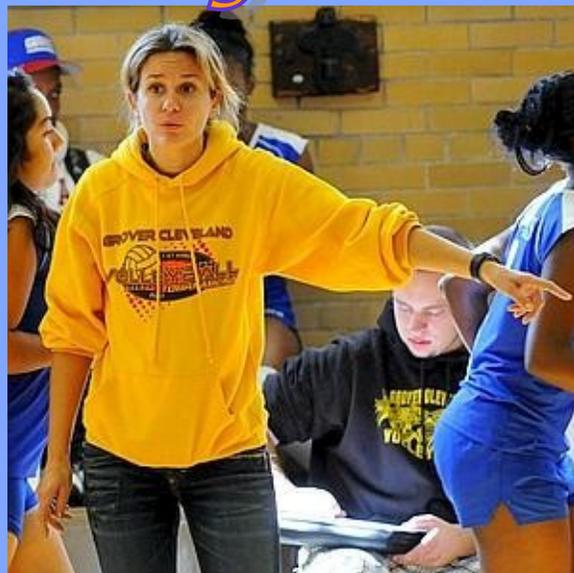
"Let's face it, she's the team," Dawidowska said. "And if I had a more experienced setter to work with her I think we would be even more productive. It's not difficult to notice that offensively, she's my go getter. She's amazing. She's hungry."

Alfonso Reyes had five kills against SSLJR (7-4) and Menajda Mezini followed with 10 assists. Dawidowska moved left-handed Angelica Aquino during the season from right side to middle, because it's easier to set here there. She had three kills, two digs and three aces Friday. Aquino had four blocks in a row last week in a match at the Kennedy tournament.

"She's really, really been stepping up, defensively and offensively," Dawidowska said.

The entire team has taken things to a different level. The coach said they have all been gym rats and are dreading the end to this remarkable season. Dawidowska joked that she's praying to all the volleyball gods about an upset of Cardozo. But even if the Tigers lose, this was a foundation-building season for the Ridgewood school.

"I can't wait for next year," Dawidowska said. "We're gonna bring it."



Cleveland coach Anna Dawidowska points back to this set victory over Stuyvesant from the Seward Park tournament as when her Tigers turned things around.