

Lady Chiefs advance to quarterfinals with 3-1 win over Brusly

NATCHITOCHES, La. – The fifth-ranked Natchitoches Central Lady Chiefs' volleyball team advanced to Division II quarterfinals for the first time in school history with 3-1 win (21-25, 25-17, 25-22, 25-18) over 12th-ranked Brusly Panthers in the second round Saturday at NCHS.

The Lady Chiefs (32-3) were led by senior Ehren Guidroz with 20 kills and a block while senior Brooklyn Smith added eight kills and two blocks. Senior Tatum Kay added six kills and a block while Alison Key had six kills and three blocks. But the x-factor was senior Keaton Mooney with five aces.

After the Lady Chiefs dropped set 1 and trailed 6-2 in the second set, head coach Mindy Stokes never saw any panic from her team.

"Even when we got behind in the third set our girls never panicked," said Stokes. "And we just kept fighting. Noone shut down mentally at any point of the game even when things weren't going great."

But Mooney's five aces were a large part of NCHS's come-from-behind win.

"I thought Keaton was big for us when we really needed a big serve all game long," said Stokes. "I always tell them to be aggressive on the serves to get the other team outside of their system."

NCHS would rally back to take set 2 25-17 and then got down 17-11 in the third set before fighting back for a 25-22 win. The Lady Chiefs were in control of set 4 as they pushed out to a 20-12 lead before clinching the match.

"It's a true testament of what these kids bought into," said Stokes. "We're not the tallest and the most athletic. But we had grit and showed it today. That first set was frustrating because we knew the mistakes we made. But we made the adjustments, and I thought we just grinded it out top to bottom as a team all game long."

The Lady Chiefs will play (4) South LaFourche (30-8) in the quarterfinals Thursday at 3:40 pm at the Cajundome in Lafayette.