

Bump, Set, Spike

by Chloe Mannon

It was the last volleyball game of the year and the voices of the crowd filled the room. This was my first time playing on the JV team as I was a freshman, so I was extremely nervous. We sat on the sidelines in our chairs patiently waiting for our turn to warm up. The squeaks from shoes could be heard as the other team was performing their warm up drill. Then, the buzzer went off and it was our turn to use the court. We practiced three drills, each harder than the one before it. First came thuds from our return to the ground after our blocking drill. Next came slaps from our serving and hitting drill. And finally came squeaks from our shoes and skin against the floor as we ran and dove for balls. Before long, our time was also up and it was time for the game to begin. People came rushing into the gym walking to the bleachers, and with them came the smell of fresh popcorn. We watched as the crowd multiplied and the room became louder with the increasing amount of voices. The captains were then called to do the coin flip as the rest of us ran to gather balls and fill our water bottles. Then, we stood on the sideline and did the National Anthem. After that, we got to our positions as quickly as we could because we were ready to play.

We got the first serve so our first server waited behind the end line, eager to begin and get their serve over the net. The whistle blew. The server threw the ball into the air and swung. However, they didn't swing with enough force and the ball went right into the net. We rotated and got to our receive positions on the court. The server from the other team served five balls over the net before we were able to get it back and score. Then, we served a couple over and they got the ball back. For the rest of the first

set, things went this way. At the very end, one of our girls was able to serve three in a row and get the win.

After the first set, we switched sides and got right back on the court. Our coach was pretty happy with us after the last game, but she still wanted us to play the best we could. We got all of our serves over this time and even had some really good streaks. The defense was even better than the first game, too. Girls were sprinting and diving to get the balls up and ready for a strong attack, which we were able to get quite a few of in this set. Very similarly to the first set, the other team also had some good servers, so this set was a pretty close one. But, at the end, we were able to hold our ground and come out as the winners once again.

We switched sides again and got to our positions. The next two sets were a little more tricky than the last one though because the other team had a different player in the game than before. She was the first server and she had a really good jump serve, so she was able to get a ton of serves in before we could even return the ball. She was also really tall and a good blocker, which meant we weren't able to get in very many strong attacks. Both the third and the fourth sets went by with us barely getting any serves or attacks, let alone points. The score was now 2-2 and whoever won the next set would be the winners. Even though we still had a good chance of beating them in the final set, most of my team had lost hope in winning.

There was a short time before the final set for us to discuss our game plan, and we didn't waste that time. Coach told us we needed to start moving more. She said we did a great job of running and diving in the first two sets, but that we lost that in the last two sets. We agreed and got out onto the court. We got to serve first in the final set,

which made us all very excited. We even got in four serves before the other team made a really good attack on us, sending the ball right to the floor just inches in front of the net. We went back and forth for a while after that. The scores were still really close and we knew we needed to step up our game. The other team had gotten three serves over already and were about to have their fourth when one of my teammates sprinted as fast as they could to get a ball that went out of bounds. They were able to get it up high enough for an attack, and we got the point. Then, it was my serve.

I usually don't do too bad at serving, but I was really anxious, so I thought I would mess up, but I didn't let that stop me from trying my best. A-C-E. ACE! My serve went over and I got an ace. I served again. A-C-E. ACE! I got another ace. I was able to get in two more serves before they returned the ball on with a strong attack. For the next few minutes the nerves were kicking in. The crowd was getting pretty rowdy at this point in the game, screaming and stomping their feet in the bleachers, cheering us on. Play after play we all flew to the floor digging up the ball and trying to get it set up for an attack. We had made a good amount of successful attacks by this time and had gained the lead. 23-19 read the scoreboard. Just two more serves and we would win the game. Even though we were in the lead, the other team had to serve, so we would have to get the ball back without letting them get any points. But, they got one point, then two, three, then four. It was now 23-23 and the other team was still serving. If we wanted to win this, we needed to go all in and give it everything we got. We were all drenched in sweat and our legs had burns from diving, but we didn't let that stop us. We really wanted to win this game. So, when the ball came over the net, we got it nice and high to the setter, the setter got it nice and high to the hitter, and the hitter swung with lots of

force. Thud. The ball went down right in front of the blocker and we got the point. It was 24-23 and we only needed one more serve before we would win. The last serve was over the net and the other team was swinging on their attack when we heard a smack. One of the blockers on our team had blocked the attack and we had won the game. The crowd cheered much louder than they had before. We quickly shook hands and said “good game” to the other team before celebrating the win of our last game. For a while there, we had lost hope in winning, but because we stuck it out and played the best we could, we were able to win.