

CIS women's volleyball nationals: fifth-ranked Laval upset number-four Cougars

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Right from the opening play of the match, the fifth-ranked Université Laval Rouge et Or were in control of their quarter-final match, easily disposing of the number-four Regina Cougars in straight sets (25–21, 25–21, 25–19).

A regular at the season-ending national championship over the last three decades, Laval used their experience to push their way past the inexperienced Cougars and into the semifinals.

“We know [nationals] is a big show and the players enjoy it so much. Plus, we knew that none of the Regina players had ever been a part of this atmosphere and so we took advantage of that,” Rouge et Or head coach Alain Pelletier.

Leading the way for Laval was fourth-year power hitter Melanie Savoie, who tallied game highs in kills (12) and service aces (3). Karine Ducharme chipped in with eight kills and led the Rouge et Or with a 53.8 per cent attack efficiency.

Laval also did a tremendous job of keeping Second Team CIS All-Star Beth Clark to a mere eight kills. Her lacklustre performance, and that of her team, led to very little outward enthusiasm and support from the Cougars bench.

Conversely, the intensity and energy of the Laval players and coaches was apparent after every point won.

“We have Latin blood,” Pelletier said as he burst into a bit of a chuckle. “All of the Quebec teams show their emotions frequently, but the schools in the West

play more tactical and strategy games. Early on, we wanted to establish a presence like we were playing at home, and we did.”

Next up for Laval is a rematch with the two-time defending national champion UBC Thunderbirds. The two schools met in one of last year’s semifinal matches, with the T-Birds coming away with a 3–0 victory. However, the Rouge et Or will be looking for redemption in tomorrow’s semifinal showdown.