

Goldies Back on Winning Track

By Dennis Berg

The last time the OCC Golden Masters brought home "the Gold" was in 1985. Since then, they've been runnersup twice and placed fourth once.

This year, the Gold is back as the Club's 45-year and over team won the U.S. Volleyball Association national title on June 9 in Toledo, Ohio, defeating a tough Midwest all-star team, DTF, in the championship finals.

Coached brilliantly by John Zabriskie, the Goldies won nine of 10 matches, going undefeated in the single elimination playoffs the final two days.

The only loss was to Montgomery VB Club in the final pool play match, as there seemed to be no way to beat a couple of 6'7" blockers and scrappy backcourt defense.

Dennis Berg, Rich Riffero and Dick Templeman played their normal steady games. Fred Chuckovich, Tom Haine and Fred Hiapo made such a difference with outstanding play at most crucial times. Bill Baird, Linzy Hotz and Wayne Kekina were invaluable as backcourt specialists with Bob Kashare and Mark Lawson contributing positively in the substitutes role.

The 21-team tourney format called for three pools of seven teams to play a round robin with the top four in each pool advancing to a 12-team single elimination playoff.

The Goldies were 5-0 going into the final pool play match against Montgomery (also 5-0). After losing 11-9 and 14-10, OCC was seeded fifth for the championship playoffs.

Multnomah VB of Portland was the Goldies first victim, 15-4, 15-10 and advanced to the quarterfinals against Stonehenge of Northern California. With Tommy Haine playing his best match in many nationals, and Chuckovich making some key saves, OCC barely won 15-11, 5-15, 12-10.

That win set up a rematch with Montgomery in the semi-finals with the Goldies looking for revenge. Trailing 11-5 in the first game with only a minute on the clock, Outrigger somehow put the right combination of serving and blocking together to rebound and win 13-11 on time. With equal difficulty the Goldies won the second game 12-10 and into the tourney finals they went.

Zabriskie reminded the team that

getting to the finals was not enough, and sights were set on beating DTF, a team that had won a big semi-final match against the defending champs, Legends of Southern California.

Strategic line-up adjustments by Zabriskie, combined with pinpoint serving and solid team defense, allowed the Goldies to easily win the championship match, 15-4, 15-10. Fred Hiapo blocked match point, a fitting end to his fine performance throughout the playoffs.

Hiapo, Berg and Riffero were honored as first team All-Americans and Templeman was a second team choice. Baird, Chuckovich and Haine were overlooked only by the selection committee, as their individual play was certainly deserving of honorable recognition.

And, this was the Year of the Coach, as John Zabriskie provided the leadership and expertise that most feel really made the difference. Thank you, John!

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