

HIGH SCHOOL VOLLEYBALL 4A EAST REGION I SEMIFINAL

Mustangs experience ‘surreal’ moment

Meade sweeps past Glen Burnie to earn spot in regional championship

BY KATHERINE FOMINYKH

Senior Navaeh Ward sat in her room in the waning days of summer, thinking about the Meade volleyball team she wanted to see in her final season.

A winning record. A chance to qualify for the state tournament.

“I’ve not been manifesting, but I’ve been working toward it,” Ward said.

Now, Meade volleyball is just one match away from that reality. Each set looked different, but panned out just the same — the Mustangs downed Glen Burnie in three sets, 25-19, 25-10, 25-16, to advance to the Class 4A East Region I final on Wednesday.

“I don’t want to say surreal, but,” Ward said, “that’s what it is.”

Meade (9-4) exerted patience as Glen Burnie tangled its mistakes into a quick 7-1 deficit. When Gophers senior Emauri Ransome stepped to the serving line, she took an eraser to those errors. With two aces and four service points, the Gophers whittled Meade’s lead until it was 9-9 before the Gophers ultimately take the lead for a point.

Only when their advantage disappeared did the Mustangs rattle to attention.

Calamitous wake-up call aside, the Mustangs kept pace through Glen Burnie’s 18-18 tie — and then took a step forward. Sophomore libero Jazlynn Dubose’s ace struck

open hardwood and the Mustangs wrangled the first set, 25-19.

The focus afterward was simple.

“Stay calm,” junior Zaina Osimokun said.

Given what happened last set, the Mustangs were not going to just craft Glen Burnie’s mistakes into a lead. They needed to be a little more active. Ward drilled four points to the floor and an ace, junior Zyon Austin an ace, kill and block, as the Mustangs raced to the end of the second set with little interference from the visitors.

“We had to work smarter, not harder,” Ward said.

So when Glen Burnie did jolt a bit of life into its offense via points from Mia Gomez and Melissa Cunningham, there was no hope for total recovery. Ward took the second touch from her teammate and fired to the spot in front of a fallen Gopher for a 25-10 second-set win.

As severely as Meade handled Glen Burnie in that set, the Gophers’ spirit hadn’t withered. If anything, it inflamed.

Never did Meade lead by more than three points against the front line attacks until it dipped into its 16th point, 16-12, again when Osimokun dropped an ace at Glen Burnie’s feet, and again as Austin followed up with another kill.

The Mustangs will face Old Mill at home on Wednesday for the regional championship.