

## SBCC MEN'S VOLLEYBALL

By Dave Loveton, sports information

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# Vaqueros swept in State quarterfinal

*Hertlein has 17 kills in season finale*

Irvine Valley got hot at the end of each set Monday night to sweep SBCC out of the state men's volleyball playoffs in a quarterfinal match at the Sports Pavilion.

Brando Directo, a 5-9 outside hitter with great leaping ability, led the Lasers (13-6) to the 25-22, 26-24, 25-22 victory. Irvine, the No. 3 team from the Pacific Coast Athletic Conference, outscored the Vaqueros 5-2 at the end of the first set, 4-1 in the second and 7-2 in the third after Santa Barbara had forged a 20-18 advantage.

Sophomores Justin Hertlein and Kyle Benskin topped SBCC (9-9) with 17 and 11 kills, respectively.

"We didn't pass as well as we usually do but we can't say that was the only thing," said Hertlein, a 6-4 opposite. "They played really, really well. They swung the ball in, they dug a lot of balls and they served well.

"Every time we had a run, we'd have a little hiccup or a call didn't go our way."

Benskin had 11 kills on 13 attempts with no errors for an scintillating .846 hitting percentage. "Cody Zoesch, our big middle, was battling bronchitis yesterday and today and he still finished with four kills and four stuff blocks," noted first-year coach Armen Zakarian.

Hertlein and Benskin had three blocks apiece and Jacob Jenkins made 10 digs.

Following a 5-2 run in the second set, SBCC took a 23-22 lead when Kaahukane Leite-Ah Yo slammed an overpass. But the Lasers scored the last three points to take a 2-0 lead in the best-of-5 sets.

"The guys played unbelievable tonight," said Zakarian. "Irvine came out with a lot of focus and they didn't make many mistakes.

"You don't stop a player like No. 4 (Directo), you just try to stop the guys around him. We've been doing a good job of that all season. He didn't beat us all that much at the end of games. They had to earn it.

"Could we have limited some of the errors we made? Absolutely. When they got sets they didn't like, they put the ball in the court. When we got sets we didn't like, we tried to do something amazing with it and we ended up hitting balls out."

SBCC won five straight matches near the end of the year to earn its first playoff berth in three years.

“We’re happy with how this season went,” said Hertlein. “Armen is a really good coach and we got a lot better this year. He taught us a lot and it was a great experience.”

Zakarian, a former SBCC and UCSB star, will lose four sophomore starters off a squad that went 6-4 in the WSC and handed Long Beach its first conference loss in 29 matches.

“We’re losing some guys but if you build it, they will come,” he said. “I’ve already got some ridiculous recruits who’ve been watching us play this year and seen what we’ve been doing.”