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Volleyball: Bethel supports breast cancer awareness

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Sarah Benton and Meagan Fulcher are more than just teammates on the Bethel Christian Academy volleyball team.

Both players relate to each other off the court because of their respective experiences with family members who had breast cancer.

Fulcher's mother, Sarai, is a breast cancer survivor.

But Benton's mother, Kimberly, passed away in 2011. Her cancer spread to breast cancer toward the end.

Benton, 14, is Bethel's setter who is currently sitting out with an ankle injury.

The pair have known one another for eight years, and when Bethel travelled to Greenville to play in the Spike it For Life volleyball tournament earlier this month, it was more personal for Benton and Fulcher.

"It pretty much changed every aspect of my life," Benton said about losing her mother. "My dad really had to step up, and I had to step up a lot and take on the motherhood role."

Benton has two older brothers and has played volleyball just these last two years.

Fulcher said Spike it For Life was more personal to her and Benton.

"It was just encouraging, knowing that everybody was there to help support the cause," Fulcher said. "It really meant a lot."

Outside of October, which is National Breast Cancer Awareness month, the girls attend many other benefits that support those affected by the disease, including 5K runs, golf tournaments and fundraisers.

It was Bethel's first time in the tournament, and coach Michelle Williams said she plans to do more activities with the team next season.

"I wanted my girls to know that their team stood behind them and their families and whatever situation in life they have," Williams said about why she decided to play in the

tournament. "Cancer took my father, so it's very personal to me as well. I wanted them to be involved and be able to give back to the community.

"The girls, it made a huge impact on them and their lives."

Bethel players wore pink jerseys during games this month to further show support.

"It's kind of encouraging to see a group of people all coming together to support the cause," Benton said. "I think through something like a tragedy, it really brings a family or teammates together and forms a bond you can't break."

BETHEL SWEEPS IN FIRST ROUND, POWERED BEHIND WORTHINGTON SISTERS

Jensen and Kelsey Worthington's proven chemistry helped Bethel Christian Academy volleyball sweep Raleigh Christian Academy on Friday.

The Trojans handily won the first round of state playoffs, 3-0, to advance to the NCCSA state tournament.

Kelsey led with 29 kills and added 16 points, as Jensen had a game-high 35 assists and 14 points. Emily Winstead led all 18 points.

Bethel held RCA to just five points in the third set.

Kelsey's trio of aces to start the set got Bethel a 7-1 advantage. She and her sister exchanged high-fives as they took a defensive stance, a 15-3 Bethel edge on the board.

Because Benton is out with an ankle injury, it gave Jensen an opportunity to set up for her hard-hitting sister.

"It feels at home because I've done it for three years," said Jensen, the former setter. "I don't even have to think if she's going to be there. Because of the chemistry and connection, I know she'll get the ball."

Williams said the sisters bring an unmatched athleticism and vision to the floor, which will help as the Trojans proceed through the post season.

Kelsey said her sister setting her up will help in the upcoming tournament since "we know what the other is thinking. It's a good thing."