

Naselle’s smallest player has the biggest heart

Injured volleyballer plays every shot from the bench

By PATRICK WEBB
For the Observer

YAKIMA — Naselle brought a secret weapon to the WIAA state volleyball tournament. Her name was Bella Colombo. The feisty junior injured her ACL in a tournament against Pe Ell late in the season. But that didn’t stop No. 6 for suiting up — on crutches — and “playing” every game from the bench. As the younger kids lined the school corridor for the traditional “On to state!” clapping send-off this past week, there was Colombo on crutches, almost racing to the bus. Team introductions before the first game at the Sun Dome included her, and rightly so. And as Morgan Reitz made the first serve in the first game against Pomeroy, it was if Colombo was on the court with her. Every time inspirational leader Peyton Dalton leaped up two-handed to set the ball — as she did all season — Colombo was there.

Every time strong net player Kaylin Shrives leaped for a spike — as she did all season — Colombo was there. And every time libero Brynn Tarabochia stooped for a dig in the back court — as she did all season — Colombo was there. Comet Power was in full voice from the spectators’ gallery. But it was a toss-up whether the throng of blue and yellow clad adults (from Naselle, Rosburg and beyond) was as loud as one 5-4 teenager on the bench. In the time-out huddle, coaches Rebekah Wirkkala and Hanna Higginbotham calmed nerves and shaped plays to help their Comets soar. Newly appointed colleague Kayti Updike, a 2014 NHS graduate, provided fresh eyes and enthusiasm to their coaching strategy. And amid them all, as if her crutches were a simple extension of her personality, Colombo played her role. It helped Wirkkala’s squad that speedy NHS track athlete Echo Cenci (a giant 5-6) has

developed into a skillful volleyball enthusiast. “It’s hard not being in there,” Colombo said. “But it’s great seeing how good Echo is right now. I have 100% confidence in her.” And her cheerleading clinic? “I’m glad that I can help keep spirits up,” she grinned. Coach Wirkkala gets misty eyed thinking about Colombo. “Her heart is 100% on the court,” she said. “I get so emotional thinking about it. She should be on the court!” The first-game bracket pitted Naselle against eastern Washington powerhouse Pomeroy. The Pirates had had a disappointing season and qualified for state as fourth in their district. But Naselle didn’t take anything for granted. Eventually, after a few slips along the way, the Comets won 25-20, 25-16, 25-12 to advance to the next round. As Shrives, Dalton and co. embraced in a circle, Colombo, forgetting her crutches, hopped into the melee and joined the joyous hug. The winning team was complete.

‘HER HEART IS 100% ON THE COURT. I GET SO EMOTIONAL THINKING ABOUT IT. SHE SHOULD BE ON THE COURT!’

Coach Rebekah Wirkkala



Bella Colombo was on crutches at the WIAA state volleyball tournament in Yakima last week. But that didn’t stop the enthusiastic junior from playing a key role in the Comets’ success.

PATRICK WEBB

State Supreme Court puts check on Inslee’s veto pen

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

OLYMPIA — The Washington Supreme Court ruled 7-2 Nov. 10 that Gov. Jay Inslee overstepped his powers by partially vetoing a transportation budget in 2019. Although Washington governors can veto individual expenditures, they can’t cut all strings lawmakers attach to the spending, the majority ruled. Inslee went too far by vetoing provisions that barred the Department of Transportation from considering “fuel type” in funding public transit, the court ruled. While Inslee could have vetoed the spending, he couldn’t alter the conditions set by lawmakers, Justice Sheryl Gordon McCloud wrote. “Those ‘strings’ allow the Legislature to fulfill its constitutional role and to check the power of the executive,” she wrote. In a dissent, Justice Mary Yu said the decision weakens the governor. “I believe the majority shifts the balance of power too far in favor of the Legislature,” she wrote. Spokeswoman Tara Lee said the governor’s office was reviewing the decision. Washington governors



Washington Supreme Court

DON JENKINS/CAPITAL PRESS

have broader veto powers than presidents. The governor can veto sections of bills and trim budgets with line-item vetoes. Inslee has tested the limits of those powers. This year, he signed cap-and-trade and low-carbon fuel bills, but vetoed conditioning the climate laws on a transportation package. The veto upset a bargain between lawmakers who advocated climate action and legislators who wanted to increase funding for highways and other transportation projects. The ruling stemmed from a lawsuit filed by the Democrat-controlled Legislature. The case is the first involving an Inslee veto to go to the

state Supreme Court. In his veto message, Inslee said the fuel-type provision would slow the move to biofuels and electric vehicles. He argued that the provision also violated a state law that requires the transportation department to consider air quality and energy efficiency in awarding grants. The court rejected the claim, noting that “fuel type” doesn’t appear in the law. The court also rejected claims that legislators were trying to slip past the govern-

nor a “substantive law” in a spending bill. The proviso applied only to the transit grants in the budget and didn’t define anyone’s right or eligibility for public services, the court ruled. Justices Charles Johnson, Debra Stephens, Barbara Madsen, Susan Owens, Raquel Montoya-Lewis and Helen Whitener signed the majority opinion. Justice Steven Gonzales signed Yu’s dissent. The Building Industry Association of Washington sued Inslee in 2019 over his partial veto of an orca-recovery bill. Lawmakers conditioned higher fines for disturbing riverbeds on removing gravel to protect eroding farmland in Grays Harbor, Snohomish and Whatcom counties. Inslee vetoed the gravel removal reference while approving the higher fines. The Court of Appeals Division II ruled the BIAW didn’t have standing to sue because it hadn’t shown its members had been harmed by the veto.



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While in Scotland, Inslee orders state to electrify motor pool

By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

GLASGOW, Scotland — Washington Gov. Jay Inslee has directed state agencies to electrify their vehicle fleets by 2040, announcing the executive order at the United Nations climate conference. State vehicles account for about 0.09% of Washington’s greenhouse gases, according to inventories by the Department of Ecology. Agencies will phase in electrification. At least 40% of the state’s cars and light trucks must be electric by 2025, according to the order. Speaking to reporters via video conference, Inslee said the measure was an example of steps states and provinces can take independently to act on the climate. “Mostly the message from Glasgow is Washington state is leading the charge, and we’re not alone,” he said. “Washington state wants to be ahead of Washington, D.C.”

Inslee arrived at the 26th annual UN climate conference on Nov. 6. On Nov. 9, he made an appearance with Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Michael Regan. He planned to tour Scotland on Nov. 10 with his wife, Trudi, and then meet Nov. 11 with United Kingdom climate leaders to conclude the conference, according to his office. Washington and 67 other states, provinces and cities also announced non-binding pledges to cut greenhouse gases, though they did not agree on uniform measures. Only California, two Mexican states, a Brazilian state and an Indonesian province committed to reducing livestock emissions 30% by 2030. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization estimates the target could be reached by better livestock management, though warned against sacrificing the goal of zero hunger by 2030.

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