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Punahou holds off Word of Life

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Even wins can be learning experiences.

After pulling off a close victory earlier in the week, host Punahou looked particularly sharp in a 25-13, 25-19 victory over Word of Life yesterday in an Interscholastic League of Honolulu girls volleyball match at Hemmeter Fieldhouse.

Juliana Behrens and Tai Manu-Olevao led the Buffanblu (7-0) with nine kills each. Punahou, ranked No. 1 in The Advertiser's Top 10 poll, edged No. 6 Hawai'i Baptist, 26-24, 25-20, on Tuesday night in a match where neither team looked sharp and the end result could have gone either way.

"When we played HBA, we weren't as sharp as we should've been," Punahou setter Malia Patterson said. "For this game, we really tried to clean up everything and I think we did that.

"The first set was pretty good and our passing was really nice. We tried to get in system a lot."

Phoibe Fetu had four kills to lead No. 10 Word of Life (5-2).

The Buffanblu breezed through Set 1, going up 10-4 after back-to-back kills by Manu-Olevao. Punahou built on its lead, and a kill and block by Manu-Olevao pushed the advantage to 19-9.

Punahou middles Brigitte Russo and Carina Thompson combined for six kills in Set 1.

"We were trying to get it to the middles a lot so we could stay in system," Patterson said. "We had height as an advantage so we try to get it to our middles to put it away, or get it to our outsides Juli and Tai."

Word of Life looked uncharacteristic of the squad that upset 'Iolani last week. The Firebrands had six service errors in Set 1.

"We didn't bring enough intensity," said Word of Life's Kainoa Ocasek. "We brought intensity, but not enough. We came back in the second set."

The score was tied in Set 2 when Kaena Kaina's block put Word of Life up 6-5.

Patterson's push over the net for a kill and Russo's service ace gave Punahou a 7-6 lead.

There were three more ties until a block and kill by Behrens put Punahou ahead 11-9.

Ocasek's kill and a block and kill from Alohi Kaho'ohanohano helped Word of Life close to 13-12. But the Buffanblu scored the next four points to pull away. Behrens had two kills and Katherine Brooks had an ace during the run.

Manu-Olevao had three kills and a block to finish out the match.

"We improved a lot from the HBA game because we just started to have positive thoughts in this game and kept it positive," Manu-Olevao said.

And for Word of Life, the loss was a learning experience as well.

"We just have to learn from our mistakes, not dwell on the game and bounce because I know we can," Ocasek said.
