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## HIGH SCHOOL VOLLEYBALL

# Punahou takes title away from Kamehameha

[By Kim Baxter](#)

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In a rematch of last year's Division I state championship game, the Punahou girls volleyball team served notice that powerhouse Kamehameha will have some serious company this season.

The Buffanblu, one week after coming in second at 'Iolani's Ann Kang Invitational tournament, bested four-time state defending champion Kamehameha in its own annual Hawaii Volleyball Invitational Tournament to win the preseason title. Punahou, which went through the three-day tournament undefeated, toppled the Warriors 25-19, 26-27, 25-15 in a well-played match on Kamehameha's home court yesterday.

"It was really fun, and now we know we can beat them," said Punahou senior outside hitter Juliana Behrens, who led all hitters with 21 kills. "It's a nice thought to have in our heads."

The Buffanblu were throttled in last year's state title game by Kamehameha and looked lackluster against California's Redondo Union last week at 'Iolani.

But they came out firing yesterday and pulled away in the third game to clinch the match. They even had three match points in Game 2 before Kamehameha came from behind and squeaked out a second-set win (the set was capped at 27).

It is a mere preseason championship that will not go down in the win-loss column, but the victory over Kamehameha so clearly made a big impact on the Punahou squad.

"It's important," said Punahou coach Jim Iams. "Kamehameha has been the team to beat in the state for a long time. It's always hard to dethrone the queen."

For one day, Punahou stole that crown thanks to nearly flawless hitting from outside hitters Behrens and Tai Manu-Olevao (18 kills), scrambling defense that kept the Warriors' big swings from finding the court, solid passing (Kamehameha had just one ace) and more kills out of middle hitters Brigitte Russo and Carina

### **VOLLEYBALL YESTERDAY**

Punahou      25 26 25

Kamehameha 21 27 15

Thompson.

The Buffanblu pulled away in Game 1 after fighting to a 14-14 tie by scoring 11 of the final 16 points. They found a way to win points on long rallies, and Kamehameha's poor passing kept its offense from finding a rhythm.

In Game 2, the Warrior's big hitters -- Misty Ma'a and Talia Jardin-Fermentez -- finally got some swings and Punahou stumbled a bit. The set ended when the Buffanblu's scramble, after a Kamehameha block, fell meekly on its side of the net.

Punahou pulled away in the third game and made this into a laugher as Behrens and Manu-Olveao combined for seven kills as the Buffanblu pushed a 10-8 lead to a 20-11 cushion.

"Punahou's a great team," said Kamehameha coach Chris Blake. "... Right now, they're the more seasoned team. They're a balanced group, very well coached. It was great for us to test and see where we were. We saw a lot of great things that came out of today. Our girls worked hard, and we showed a lot of potential. But today Punahou was the better team."

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