

Alaska State Volleyball Championships set to start

The 2007 ASAA/First National Bank State 1A/2A/3A-West & Mixed Six Volleyball Championships begin Thursday, Dec. 6 at Dimond High School. Play ends with championship games and awards ceremonies Saturday, Dec. 8.

In the first match of the day, Klawock and Dillingham serve up play at 2 p.m. Dillingham finished third place in the Great Alaska Conference this year. The Wolverines won the championship in 2004 and 2001, and were the runners-up in 2005 and 2003. Klawock was the Southeast Conference champions this year. The Chieftains last appeared in the state tournament in 2004, finishing in seventh place. In 2001, they finished in fourth place.

Also at 2 p.m., Golovin and Mt. Village face off in the top bracket of the Mixed Six. Golovin won the Western Interior Conference this year, and placed third in last year's state tournament. The Lynx have won the championships three times: 2004, 1999 and 1997. Mt. Village finished the season second in the Yukon River Conference. Although this is the Strivers' first appearance in the state tournament since 2004, they are expected to be fierce competitors. Esther Agwiak, Keith DelaRosa and Phylcia Wilde helped lead the team to a 13-3 regular season finish.

At 3:45 p.m., Barrow faces off against Ninilchik. Barrow was the runner-up in the Great Alaska Conference, and they are the two-time defending champions. The Whalers also won in 2003. Ninilchik, led by Ashley Bartolowits, Grace Ehlers, Lindsay Schnabl and Heidi Skjold, finished second in the Borealis Conference this year and ended with a 15-3 record. This is their third appearance at state. The Wolverines placed first at the Ninilchik Spikefest and Kenny Lake Classic this year, and they placed second at the CIA tournament.

At the same time, Newhalen and Buckland meet in the Mixed Six. Newhalen was the 2007 Southwest Conference champions. The Malemutes were last champions in 2002. They appeared in the tournament in 2006 and finished fifth, and then they were second in 2004. Buckland finished the season as runner-up in the Arctic Conference, ending with a 9-3 record. This is the Sissauni's first appearance at state since 2000.

Tok meets Skagway at 5:30 p.m. Skagway finished second in the Southeast Conference in 2007. This is the Panthers' third appearance at state, last appearing in 2005. The 2007 champions of Borealis Conference, the Tok Wolverines aim to improve last season's finish when they placed fourth at state. This is their fifth appearance at state.

In the Mixed Six, Russian Mission and Akiak is a match between two conference champions. Russian Mission is the 2007 champions of Yukon River Conference, while Akiak is the Kuskokwim Conference champion. This is the Russian Mission Raiders' fifth straight appearance at state, and they finished fourth last year. The Akiak Thunderbolts are making history with their first appearance at state.

Bethel and Nikolaevsk conclude play at 7:15 p.m., Thursday. Nikolaevsk started playing volleyball in 2001, and this is the Warriors' first appearance in the state tournament. Nine girls attend the high school, located on the Kenai Peninsula, and six are on this year's team. The Warriors finished third

Place in Borealis Conference this year. Bethel is the champion of Great Alaska Conference, finishing the regular season with a 20-2 record. The Warriors placed third in last year's state tournament.

Ambler and Unalakleet meet in the Mixed Six at the same time. The two teams look to win their first state championship. Ambler was the Arctic Conference champions this year, finishing 10-3. In 2006, the Grizzlies finished second and placed fourth in the 2004 state tournament. For the fourth straight year, the Unalakleet Wolfpack are in the state tournament. The Wolfpack finished as the 2007 runner-up in the Western Interior Conference. Last year, they placed sixth and in 2005, they were second.

The second round matches start at 9 a.m. Friday, with the semifinals scheduled for 1:30 p.m. for the Mixed Six and 2 p.m. for the 1A/2A/3A West. At 10:45 a.m., Saturday, teams play for fourth place, with the third place game starting at 12:30 p.m. For the Mixed Six teams, the fourth place game begins at 9 a.m. and the third place game begins at 2:15 p.m. The Mixed Six championship game begins at 4:30 p.m., which will be followed by an awards ceremony. At 6:30 p.m., the 1A/2A/3A West championship game starts followed by the awards ceremony. For more details about the 2007 ASAA/First National Bank State Volleyball Championships go to www.asaa.org <<http://www.assa.org>> .