

Rider, Burkburnett battle for district lead tonight

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Rider and Burkburnett are excited to be playing for the District 5-4A lead tonight, but both coaches realize every victory is going to be tough to get.

The Lady Bulldogs (12-12, 2-0) will play host to the Lady Raiders (8-15, 2-0) at 5 p.m. today. Burkburnett has survived injuries to win its first two league games.

"We've been really lucky, I think, and the kids have pulled together," Lady Bulldogs coach Linda Richards said. "The seniors kind of stepped up and said let's do something. In our district it's a tossup every night. If you're not playing your best, you can get beat that night."

The Lady Bulldogs expect to get a boost with the return of senior hitter Tonya Pickett, who has missed several matches because of injury. Pickett was the newcomer of the year as a sophomore and the team's most valuable serve last year.

Richards is hoping setter Shera Taylor can also return from her injury, but she is questionable. That would take some pressure off senior Jamie Logan.

Julia Graham, Sarah Mills and Brittany Willson lead Burk's attack at the net. Amy Taylor and Diana Walck round out the lineup.

Rider will counter with middle hitter Christen LaBrie,

VOLLEYBALL

senior setter Megan Wood, outside hitter Whitney Gee, defensive specialist Anna Crockett, Tanna Johnson and blocker Lindsay Tanner.

"So far we've played very well and we've played together," Lady Raiders coach Stacy Wolf said. "Our consistency has improved. We're putting points together."

Rider has 15 losses, but none so far that really count.

"The whole deal of playing a tough non-district schedule is to get ready for district," Wolf added. "It doesn't do a team any good to play easy teams."

Another place the Lady Raiders are doing well is on serves. Wolf said they are hitting 88-92 percent, but more importantly they are serving with purpose and trying to earn some points off the serve.

As for facing Burk, Wolf said winning the middle blocks at the net will be key.

"Julia Graham is one of Burk's strengths and we have to block her," Wolf said. "We have to distribute the ball. Any time you play at Burk's gym it's tough. They have a good crowd and they are always ready for you. On any given night in this district anyone can win."

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