



Sports

Sixth-ranked Duluth sweeps MSU

Team lacked 'consistency, intensity' said Mavericks coach

By Denny Weller
Special to The Free Press

MANKATO — No. 6-ranked Minnesota Duluth relied on a stingy defensive effort Saturday afternoon at Bresnan Arena to upend Minnesota State 30-27, 30-23, 30-24 in a North Central Conference volleyball match.

Leading the way for the Bulldogs (19-2, 6-0 in NCC) was junior defensive specialist and former Mankato West standout Crystal Hoffrogge. Hoffrogge, who was an outside hitter for the Scarlets, totaled 13 digs and eight service points.

"It was a little different, but making the switch was easy because I played all the way around in high school," Hoffrogge said. "We have such good hitters that playing back row is well worth it. Our defense has been really good, and I feel so comfortable with everybody in the defensive positions.

"We did really well at putting balls away, not so much at the beginning, but toward the end we kind of picked it up and played our game."

Minnesota State (12-6, 2-2) fell behind 9-4 in Game 1 before Mandy Reuter's cross-court kill began a 6-1 surge that got the Mavericks within 11-10 on Cathy Turner's quick kill out of the middle. Turner and Cassie Wolpern slammed kills before junior setter Steph Sandstrom's nifty ace dump, after her diving dig kept things alive, produced a 22-22 deadlock.

Vicky Braegelmann, who ended up with 11 kills, then smacked three kills as the Bulldogs went ahead 25-23. After Megan Stroud's spike off a block made it 25-24, Whitney Meierotto and Rachel Langseth closed out the 30-27 win with two kills each.

"We need to work on executing after point 25 and learning how to win," said Stroud, who had six kills and two blocks. "We can play with teams like this so it's frustrating. They just executed when they had the opportunity, and



Matt Gorrie

Minnesota State's Mandy Reuter rips a spike past Minnesota Duluth's Lindsay Clairmont during Saturday's match at Bresnan Arena. Duluth won 30-27, 30-23, 30-24.

we just didn't play up to our potential.

"Their defense was good, they dug up a lot more balls than they did last week against us. We were a little late with our blocking, and we didn't find where they hit the ball most of the time on digging. ... Blocking was a problem today."

Leading 11-10 in Game 2, the Bulldogs got two kills apiece from Braegelmann, Meierotto and Kari Wolford to open up an 18-12 lead. Wolford, who led all hitters with 17 kills, belted six kills the rest of the way as Minnesota Duluth closed out the 30-23 win.

Wolford's cross-court rocket snapped an 8-all tie in Game 3 before three digs from Hoffrogge on the next rally enabled a Mavericks' hitting error to put the Bulldogs in front for good. Hoffrogge had a five-point service run to make it 21-15.

"We need to work on executing after point 25 and learning how to win. We can play with teams like this so it's frustrating. They just executed when they had the opportunity, and we just didn't play up to our potential."

MEGAN STROUD,
Minnesota State middle hitter

Reuter's three kills and three service points helped Minnesota State close within 25-21 before kills from Langseth and Wolford sparked a game-ending 5-3 run.

Meierotto had 10 kills for the winners, and Langseth chipped in eight.

Katie Gangelhoff collected 43 assists and 13 digs.

"The consistency just wasn't there tonight," Minnesota State coach Dennis Amudson said. "I didn't feel the intensity was there when it should have been. We should have come after them from the first

point all the way until the last point. I am disappointed that we didn't bring it the whole night.

"We made some adjustments and so did they. We just let their adjustments bother us rather than readjusting back. Their defense was better than ours was because they hit the ball harder than we did."

Turner led the Mavericks with 11 kills, and Reuter added 10. Sandstrom tallied 29 assists and a team-high 13 digs.

Minnesota State plays Friday at South Dakota.