



# Sports

## Mavericks continue to slide

MSU volleyball team drops third straight match, five of last six

By Denny Weller  
 Special to The Free Press

**MANKATO** — If the Minnesota State volleyball team is going to make a run at a Division II National Tournament berth, it can't duplicate Friday's performance against North Dakota.

The Mavericks managed a dismal .168 hitting percentage in dropping a 30-24, 30-27, 30-23 North Central Conference match at Bresnan Arena. The loss was Minnesota State's (13-9, 3-4 in NCC) third straight and fifth over its past six matches.

"We didn't really play hard until it was 21-10 in the third game," Minnesota State coach Dennis Amundson said. "We didn't pass and we didn't defend. For the past couple of weeks our hitting errors have been up and we're not touching the ball on defense.

"We're not digging up balls like the other team is and that means we're getting outworked. We're going to find a lineup that is willing to work and fix what needs to be fixed."

North Dakota (13-7, 5-2) got out to a 19-12 lead in Game 1 behind three kills and an ace block from freshman middle hitter Britta Hanson. After the Mavericks put together its best run of

the match to take a 22-20 lead on Megan Stroud's ace block, the Bison took charge as Aileen Cahill belted four of her match-high 16 kills.

Ally Kwikkel's slide-step kill got the Mavericks within 25-24 before Cahill's cross-court blast began a game-ending 5-0 run to close out the 30-24 win. Cahill, a senior middle hitter from Blue Earth, hit at a solid .462 clip for the match while Hanson connected on nine kills for a blistering .562 percentage.

The two teams slugged it out in Game 2 with the biggest scoring difference being three points throughout the contest. Senior outside hitter Cassie Wolpern ripped seven of her team-high 14 kills in the game, including a cross-court ace hit that produced a tie at 26.

North Dakota's Kendyll Jones and the Mavericks' Ashley Nachreiner then traded kills before two kills and a solo block from Hanson gave the Bison a 30-27 decision. Jones ended up with 11 kills for the winners, who also received 42 set assists and three ace tips from sophomore Allison Louwagie.

"Early in the season we were the team that was at 25 taking care of games right away," Wolpern said. "I think our coaches have done



Pat Christman

Minnesota State's Megan Stroud tries to block a North Dakota player's shot during the first game of their North Central Conference match Friday.

everything they can to prepare us, now it has to come from within."

North Dakota shot out to a 21-10 lead in Game 3 behind the attacking of Cahill, Jones and Tara Holmen. However, Wolpern's kill triggered a 14-7 run that got the Mavericks within 28-24 on Wolpern's off-speed ace hit. Cahill then ping-ponged a kill off a pair of blocks

before Jones' uncontested kill ended things.

"We worked really hard in practice this week but it just didn't transfer into the game," said Turner, who had seven kills and five block assists. Steph Sandstrom had 32 set assists for the Mavericks and Nachreiner added eight kills.

Minnesota State hosts St. Cloud State at 7 p.m. today.