



# Sports

## Mavericks hold off Coyotes rally

MSU volleyball team downs South Dakota in five games

By Denny Weller  
Special to The Free Press

**MANKATO** — If the Minnesota State volleyball team was looking for style points Friday night at Bresnan Arena, it didn't get any.

Looking to make a final surge toward a berth in the NCAA Division II playoffs, the Mavericks overcame a lackluster effort to upend North Central Conference cellar dweller South Dakota 3-2. Game scores were 30-21, 30-24, 28-30, 24-30 and 15-10.

"I think we took it for granted since we won the first two games and we swept them last time at their place," Minnesota State junior setter Steff Sandstrom said. "We made some mental errors to let them back in the game, exactly what we shouldn't have done. We finally woke up in Game 5, it was like we were kidding ourselves."

Minnesota State (15-10 overall, 5-4 in NCC) looked like it would make short work of the Coyotes, winning the first two games wire to wire behind the setting of Sandstrom and attacking of Megan Stroud, Cassie Wolpern and Cathy Turner. South Dakota (4-19, 0-9) made things interesting by picking up its defensive intensity and generating more offense. Ashley Gross and Gabi Jarchow began to unload some solid hits as the Coyotes eked out a 30-28 win in Game 3 before forcing a mini-game with a 30-24 triumph.

"We've been working on playing scrappy defense and we came out with a few big plays to keep in it," Wolpern said. "Now, the problem is finishing those plays. We got



Minnesota State's Steff Sandstrom (left) recorded 55 assists in Friday's win against South Dakota. Cassie Wolpern added 18 kills and 23 digs.

some good digs but we didn't capitalize on them."

After a Mavericks' hitting error opened the final game, Stroud's double-clutch kill began a 9-2 burst that produced a 9-3 Minnesota State lead on Mandy Reuter's cross-court kill. Reuter then hit an off-speed winner before Stroud's two kills made it 14-10.

Gross' final kill got the Coyotes within 14-11 before sophomore middle hitter Ally Kwikkel smacked a kill off a quick set from Sandstrom to end things. Kwikkel finished with nine kills off the bench while Sandstrom collected 55 assists, six kills and 15 digs.

"I saw their middle blocker moving every time I was off the net so I tried to mix it up and give a 1-on-1 block to increase their hitting percentage," Sandstrom said. "Our middles were amazing and I just kept feeding them."

Wolpern, a 5-foot-10, senior, outside hitter from Belle Plaine, led the Mavericks with 18 kills and 23 digs.

Stroud added 13 kills and five block assists while Turner tallied 12 kills and Reuter had nine.

Minnesota State plays a 4 p.m. match today at Augustana.