

Bulldogs win nail-biter against Charleston Southern

By Phillip Amos

STAFF WRITER

PMAMOS@UNCA.EDU

The UNC Asheville volleyball team extended their winning streak to three games with a close victory over Charleston Southern, winning the tiebreaker, 15-13.

"The positive aspect of the match was the aggressive blocking by Jenna Dover and the ability of our team to fight back from an 8-4 deficit in the fifth set after letting a 22-17 lead slip in the fourth set," Head Coach Julie Torbett said. "Some teams would fold in those circumstances and this team didn't. We just didn't execute as well as we can so we opened the door for them."

Torbett said the Bulldogs are still not playing at 100 percent, and with injured players and a busy schedule, they have to stay in top shape.

"We hope to be 100 percent by November or late October, but it is a day-to-day process with our team this season," she said. "It will take a lot of work on the injured players' part with rehab exercises, as well as extra conditioning to be in peak shape by the tournament."

The Bulldogs almost let the win slip through their fingers as CSU forced them into a fifth set. Torbett said the team's lack of execution almost cost them the game.

"We missed serves when their best player was in the back row and we didn't block well, even though they only had two offensive weapons," she said. "Our sets were too far outside to channel the ball down the line, so we helped CSU have their best defensive performance of the season as well as two personal career highs offensively."

The victory over CSU keeps the Bulldogs undefeated in conference play, but with back-to-back conference games on Friday and Saturday, junior hitter Jenna Dover said there is still no room for error.

"The game Friday was a nice win for our program. Beating teams like Charleston Southern will keep us in the top half of our conference," she said. "We are currently 3-0 in confer-



Emily Kerr - Contributing Photographer

The Bulldogs huddle together before the third set against CSU. Left, Lauren Ficker looks to spike the ball in the fourth set.

"We have three matches this week. This is no time for a slip-up in our play."

- Jenna Dover

ence play, but we have three matches this week. This is no time for a slip-up in our play."

Kelsey Benorden agreed with Dover and said the team's ability to pull out close victories adds to the confidence and energy the team used all season to stay strong.

"We go into each match believing we can win," Benorden said. "Everyone really came together against Charleston Southern and you could tell we were not going to lose by the look in our eyes."

The Bulldogs came back after being down early in the match, losing the first set 25-27. Dover said lineup adjustments prevented the team from starting strong.

"It's been weeks since we have played in our original lineup so the

sets were a little up and down before we got comfortable," she said.

The match came down to a battle of skill as UNCA was unable to hold on to their fourth set lead and CSU forced the game to a tiebreaker.

The Bucs quickly racked up a four-point lead. Dover said the Bulldogs remained unshaken and used their experience to overcome the deficit.

"The girls from Charleston Southern were smiling at their four-point lead in the fifth set. They thought the match was over, but our team manages to find a way to win even when we are down," she said. "We're very experienced in five set matches."

Benorden, the team's outside hitter, returned Friday night after battling an ankle injury that caused her to miss the last 10 games. She made her

return known when she finished the match with two straight kills to win the game.

It was a special game for seniors Lauren Ficker and Raquel Miotto, who added their names to the NCAA record books.

Middle blocker Ficker recorded her 1,000th career kill at the match, putting her at 1,005 career kills. Liberos Miotto moved into 10th place on the NCAA all-time career list with 2,345 career digs.

"We had a lot of ups and downs against Charleston Southern. We should have won in four games," Miotto said. "Now that Benorden is back we are in better health than we were. We still have some players that are not 100 percent, but they are getting there."