

Sports



The Elon University volleyball team recorded 38 kills and 49 digs against the University of Tennessee Chattanooga in its 3-0 win Sept. 26 — the second Southern Conference win in as many matches. HEATHER CASSANO | Staff Photographer

Volleyball starts SoCon schedule strong

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Sports Editor

The Elon University volleyball team snapped its five-match losing streak just in time — as Southern Conference play began.

With wins Sept. 25 and 26, the Phoenix began a different streak. Going into its Wednesday matchup against North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, Elon had a two-match winning streak and an overall record of 9-8.

"We were anxious to start off our conference schedule," head coach Mary Tendler said. "It's been a long month of nonconference matches. I knew they'd be ready."

The first SoCon game for the Phoenix came at home against Samford University Sept. 25. Senior middle blocker Sarah Schermerhorn and junior outside hitter Caroline Lemke led the team past the Bulldogs with 10 kills each to secure a 3-1 victory.

Last year, Samford won the North Division, the same half of the SoCon with the Phoenix, and continued to the tournament as the No. 1 seed from

the North.

This was a huge motivator for the players, Tendler said, and helped them stay focused on preparing for the match.

"I was more worried for our match today against Chattanooga," head coach Mary Tendler said. "They showed maturity out there."

This worry stemmed from both Elon wins against the Mocs last season and the knowledge that Chattanooga was second-to-last in the North Division in 2009 with a 4-12 SoCon record, Tendler said.

But the Phoenix didn't overlook that game and Sept. 26, it defeated Chattanooga 3-0 at home to bring its SoCon record to 2-0.

Schermerhorn recorded 13 kills and led all scorers with 16.5 points. She was followed by Lemke and senior Lauren Copenhagen with eight kills and junior right-side hitter Traci Stewart with seven. Stewart also had nine digs, second in digs only to sophomore defensive specialist Ali Deatsch, who had 11.

"We competed and executed," Tendler said. "Sometimes they compete

but don't execute, and sometimes they execute but don't compete. I think today they did both."

These two matches were coming off a nonconference schedule where the team went 7-8 in the four tournaments in which it played. In four of those losses, the Phoenix didn't win a game.

"We came off a couple of losses that made us stronger," Stewart said.

The rebounding matches against SoCon opponents Samford and Chattanooga showed the team's true character, Stewart said, and the team will try and carry that over into its next match.

Wednesday, the Phoenix will take on North Carolina A&T at 7 p.m. in Jordan Gym. The Aggies are 0-6 against SoCon teams so far this season.

"We'll try and keep our winning streak alive," Tendler said. "We'll also try and gain confidence before we have to go on a hard stretch on the road."

Last season, against North Carolina A&T, Elon won 3-1 toward the end of the year.

After the match at home against the Aggies, Elon has to travel to Appalachian State University Saturday

and Western Carolina University Sunday.

Both teams are in the North Division with the Phoenix and the Mountaineers came in second in the division.

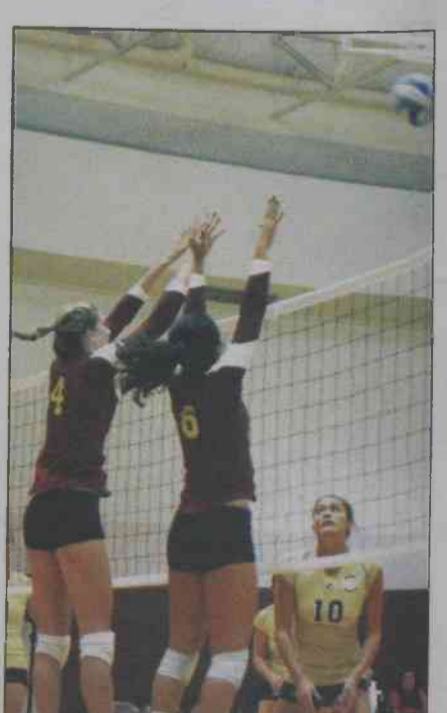
"We have to take our confidence and our trust in each other into Wednesday and into our next two conference games," Stewart said.

Wednesday is the last nonconference match for Elon for a month, and in between, it will play eight SoCon matches.

Those conference matchups are extremely important, especially in volleyball, where not everyone goes to the season-ending SoCon tournament. In 2009, only the top-2 teams in each division got to continue to the postseason, but this year, the tournament has been expanded to eight teams.

But that still leaves four teams at home after the regular season ends, making each SoCon match count.

"Only the top-4 teams (in each division) get to go to the tournament," Tendler said. "You never know which match will be the deciding match."



(From left to right) Sophomore outside hitter Allison Johnson, senior middle blocker Sarah Schermerhorn and junior setter Megan McMahon helped the Phoenix to a 3-0 victory over the University of Tennessee Chattanooga Sept. 26. It was the second of two matches at home for the team that weekend. On Sept. 25, Elon defeated Samford University 3-1 in its first Southern Conference match. ALL PHOTOS BY HEATHER CASSANO | Staff Photographer