

Nyenhuis' serve powers UNC to win



DTH/BRANDON SMITH

North Carolina's Dani Nyenhuis digs the ball in UNC's 3-0 victory against Duke. Nyenhuis recorded 13 kills and a career-high 25 digs in the match.

BY ANDY WALES STAFF WRITER

Dani Nyenhuis pounded a serve across the net, and it appeared that it would sail to the back line, but instead it dropped right above the front line.

The Duke players seemed confused, to say the least.

With superb serves and dominating defense this past weekend, Nyenhuis helped the North Carolina volleyball team sweep Duke 3-0.

The team switched its typical defensive alignment against Duke. After some extensive scouting, Coach Joe Sagula noticed that Duke tended to kill the ball short.

With the new defense, Nyenhuis and fellow outside hitter Molly Pyles had several more digs than usual.

And with sophomore outside hitter Meg Eckert still out with an ankle sprain, Nyenhuis and Pyles got most of the offensive opportunities.

Nyenhuis shined in several ways in the Duke match. With North Carolina leading 24-23 in game two, Nyenhuis leapt above the right side of the net and stuffed a Duke hitter's shot for a solo kill.

The point was crucial, as the squads traded points the rest of the way before UNC won by two.

She also said that if she stood on the endline, she would be afraid of overhitting the ball.

"I've been so bad at (serving) for the last six years of my life, so Coach is like, 'Go back there and just hit it as hard as you can,'" Nyenhuis said.

"It was more like a mental thing for me," she said. "When I left it short, it was too much to think about."

Nyenhuis had two streaks of three or more straight points on her serve Friday.

"She's got a great serve, and the way she serves, sometimes it's really going to be on, and (Friday) it was on," Sagula said.

Should Nyenhuis' serve continue to be on, her team can only benefit.

"It's like a knuckleball, and that's what you want, because it's going to go deep, high, long," Sagula said.

"The farther we can get her to move back there, the more it can move around. (Duke) was really struggling back there — like the catcher for the Red Sox."

Contact The Sports Editor at sports@unc.edu.

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