

Winning duo of Mojzis and Cline hail

Different strokes crea

BY JACOB KARABELL SENIOR WRITER

The hand slap — an emphatic, often defiant motion that can speak volumes while lasting for a mere instant. One hand extends outward, while another makes forceful contact, pointedly signaling cohesion and unity.

And each time Aniela Mojzis and Kendall Cline slap hands after a point on the tennis court, it demonstrates the unification of their hands that morphs North Carolina's top two singles players — who are markedly dissimilar — into one dominant doubles force.

Mojzis hails from South Africa; Cline comes from northern Texas.

Mojzis serves quickly and fluidly without bouncing the ball at the baseline; Cline emphatically slams each tennis ball to the court several times before ferociously unloading her serve.

Mojzis maintains her placidity through each twist and turn of a match; Cline pumps her fist, often spins her racket in her hands between points and sometimes yells encouragement to her teammates across the invisible court boundaries.

But each time their hands meld together, it serves as a reminder of how the two seniors have melded their individualities into one of the nation's top collegiate doubles teams. The duo, as of Tuesday, has emerged victorious in 17 of its 19 matches this season.

"It's especially fun now because Kendall and I have played together for such a long time," Mojzis said. "And when we play with other people, I feel like a foreigner. It just feels unusual."

It wasn't so long ago that Mojzis literally was a foreigner, bound on a completely different journey than her doubles partner.

While Cline went through the typical recruiting process, going on official visits before choosing North Carolina for its prestigious business school and successful tennis program, Mojzis selected the University simply based on some Internet research from her hometown of Cape Town, South Africa.

And although the duo had met briefly at a pre-tournament dinner more than a year before they entered UNC, they came to Chapel Hill connected by one thing — tennis. They soon became connected by more when, seemingly paired together by default at the Riviera Women's All-American Championships in October 2001, the newly formed doubles team made a stunning run to the quarterfinals, defeating the nation's third-ranked duo in the process.

From then on, Mojzis and Cline took full advantage of their newfound chemistry. One such match occurred in January 2002 when they came back from a 7-4 deficit to win a doubles match against William & Mary — against then-Tribe coach Brian Kalbas, now the coach of the Tar Heels.

"They just played the big points well, put a lot of pressure on us," Kalbas recalled. "Even when they were down, they never thought they would lose the match; they stayed composed and focused. And that really impressed me."

As their on-court play grew stronger, so did their friendship.

And as no deep friendship is complete without some occasional turbulence, the two recently reminisced about an apparent minor dispute before a match against Georgia Tech. The rapid give-and-take repartee could have come straight out of "Seinfeld."

Cline: When was that, when I was like, 'We're in a fight.' Where was that? When we were playing Georgia Tech?

Mojzis: That happened in Dallas, too? Didn't that happen in Dallas?

Cline: No, not really. It was just kind of like, whatever. ... I don't remember what happened, but something happened where she was annoyed at me, and I was annoyed at her. ... So then it was Becky (Dirksen), our assistant that was talking to us, and she was like, 'What's going on?' And I was like, 'We're in a fight.' And then it was just over.

Mojzis: We didn't even know what happened.

What did transpire was that they continued to reach new heights as a partnership, reaching the round of 32 in the NCAA doubles championships in 2003 and the round of 16 last spring, falling to eventual champions Daniela Bercek and Lauren Fisher of UCLA.

Their success can be attributed largely to the difficult-to-counteract fusion of their styles.

Mojzis' smooth groundstrokes and directional volleys effectively complement Cline's ferocious serve and finishing ability. The duo's contrasting personalities also help make the union successful.

"When she's down, I'm very good at getting her up," Mojzis said. "And she does the same — she can turn it on. We do that very well, and I think that's a big contribution to our success as a doubles team. So, when we're both playing well, then no one can beat us."

The mixture of more complex doubles strategies also has helped bolster their game. Now, Mojzis and Cline mix in the Australian formation — when the player at net stands on the same side as the server — and occasionally the

"I" formation — when the player at net stands on the center line — depending on the opponents' strengths and weaknesses.

"The formations can allow them to be more aggressive and feel more comfortable in certain situations, especially on big points," Kalbas said. "The key thing is just doing it enough in practice and knowing why you're doing it, and they've really bought into it."

That willingness to learn and improve has served as an example for the rest of the team to follow.

Sophomores Jenna Long and Sara Anundsen are two of the potential beneficiaries of Mojzis and Cline's leadership. They have emerged as the third and fourth singles players behind Mojzis and Cline, respectively, in addition to solidifying a spot as UNC's second doubles team.

Long and Anundsen have played together since last season, formulating the possibility that they could follow a similar doubles path to their senior captains.

"If we can do what they're doing, I would be so happy and proud," Long said. "That's kind of the goal. Hopefully, we're on our way."

But as the two sophomores look to continue developing their chemistry, Mojzis and Cline will re-embark on separate paths after this season.

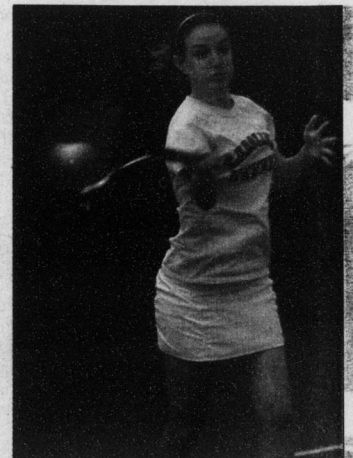
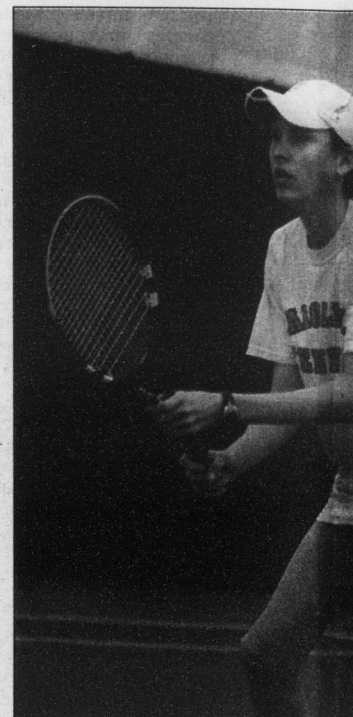
Mojzis plans to pursue graduate school in the United States and possibly serve as a collegiate assistant coach; Cline will enter law school at Texas.

But before they slap hands on the tennis court for the final time, they have one more season to complete, with ACC and NCAA championships waiting for them.

"But don't think that a title is the only thing on their minds after each point when their hands meet."

"Our goals are more performance-driven than they are outcome," Cline said. "We've talked about (a championship) in terms of 'Wouldn't that be great,' but not in terms of 'We're going to win that, and then we're going to move onto this.'"

"It's more like, 'Let's give 100 percent in practice, and the results will take care of themselves.'"



(Top) North Carolina's Aniela Mojzis prepares for an 8-3 victory against Kentucky's Kim Coventry tandem in the country. (Left) Cline unloads