

Cougars fall flat against Cedar Falls

Written by Jim Ecker

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The Cedar Rapids Kennedy volleyball team picked the wrong time to have a flat performance Tuesday afternoon.

The Cougars lost their first two games against Cedar Falls and were not able to fully recover in a 3-1 loss to the Tigers in the opening round of the Class 5A tournament at the U.S. Cellular Center.

Cedar Falls grabbed the first two games, 25-22 and 25-20, to take command. Kennedy rallied for a 25-16 victory in Game 3, but Cedar Falls rolled to a 25-20 verdict in Game 4 for the match.

Kennedy and Cedar Falls met four times this season and the Tigers finished with a 3-1 edge. Kennedy swept the Tigers in a Mississippi Valley Conference match on its way to winning the league crown, but Tuesday's match belonged to Cedar Falls.

"Today we were just a little bit flat and it didn't go our way," said senior Macy Anderson.

The ninth-ranked Cougars finished the season with a 29-10 record.

The third-ranked Cedar Falls Tigers (37-4) will face No. 2 Bettendorf (34-2) in the semifinals Thursday. Dubuque Hempstead (26-11) upset top-ranked Dowling Tuesday and will meet Ankeny Centennial (37-5) in the other semifinal.

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Kennedy had a 22-20 lead in the first game, but Cedar Falls called a timeout and ran off five straight points for a 25-22 victory. The Tigers led the second game from start to finish for the 25-20 verdict, putting the Cougars in deep trouble.

"They just got hold of it right away with the first two sets," said Kennedy junior Paige Franck. "And when you get those first two sets, you just build momentum and we weren't able to bounce back. We did in the third set, but not enough."



Kennedy dominated the third set, 25-16, with Franck, Anderson and Emma Boote leading the way with a series of kills. The Cougars could not ride that momentum, however, and saw their season end with a 25-20 setback in the fourth set.

Cedar Falls beat Kennedy twice at the Osage tournament, but the Cougars whipped the Tigers just a few days after that in their MVC match. That set the stage for their meeting in the state tournament.

"We've been waiting for Kennedy for a long time," said Cedar Falls star Alicia Harrington, who led both teams with 19 kills. "We know pretty much everything that they do and we worked really hard to find things that they don't do well and pick those out and use that to our advantage."

Kennedy made a string of enforced errors in the match and did not look to be in rhythm most of the afternoon.

"We didn't pass we well as we normally do today," said Coach Michelle Goodall. "It's hard to

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know why. We just weren't as sharp."

The Cougars shed a few tears after the match, unhappy with the way the season ended but proud of what they accomplished along the way.

"It's been a great season for us," said Anderson. "That's what Coach said in the locker room. Be proud. Conference champions and qualifying for state are a big deal, so we just have to keep our heads high and be proud."

Anderson led Kennedy with 13 kills. Franck and Boote had 12 kills apiece. Anna Fluent collected 43 assists.