UNH Volleyball: Wildcats’ Relentless Fight Helps Overcome Merrimack

Brendan Callahan, Sports Writer

DURHAM, N.H.-The University of New Hampshire (UNH) volleyball team picked up their first conference win of the year when they defeated Merrimack College 3-1. The set scores were 25-27, 25-19, 25-17, 25-15. Senior Hannah Serbousek led the team in kills with 14 while graduate student Alysa Wright tallied a team-high 7 blocks and first-year Jessica Shattles had 29 assists.

The first set had all the action. The teams would trade points to start with neither side being able to grow more than a three-point lead before UNH would rip off a six-point run to take an 18-12 lead. However, Merrimack would not go away as they would go on a run where they outscored the ‘Cats 9-3 giving Merrimack a 22-21 lead.

UNH would then jump back to take a 24-23 and looked to have won the set on a block by sophomore Lindsey Kriender but a replay review would overturn the call due to net interference making it 24-24. After some back and forth, Merrimack would complete the comeback and steal the set 27-25.

“A lot of times when we’re not playing well, it’s not what other teams are doing to us,” head coach Chris Felicano said. “There are a lot of moments where we can lose focus, but the thing I love about our team is they’re accountable”.

Set two would follow set one similarly to start with the teams trading two-point runs before UNH grabbed a 15-12 lead. UNH would spread their lead to 18-13 and this time they would not let Merrimack back in it, winning the set 24-19 on a Serbousek block.

Coach Felicano praised his team’s ability to put the first set behind them, “that’s what happens when you have a veteran team they’re able to make corrections,” he added.

Set three would see Merrimack fight back, taking a 14-11 lead before UNH would go on a run in which they outscored Merrimack 6-1. The ‘Cats capitalized on repeated Merrimack mistakes to win the 3rd set 25-17 on a Kriender spike.

“We are one of the best blocking teams in the league, we are one of the best blocking teams that the school has had in a long time,” Felicano stated, “First set we didn’t have a single block, but then our blocking began to dictate the pace of play”.

The ‘Cats closed the door on Merrimack in the fourth set jumping out to an early six-point lead thanks to some great team defense. UNH would seal the win on a net violation by Merrimack in the fourth set 25-15.

On being able to close out the game in the fourth Coach Felicano said, “When you have a veteran team that’s been there before, you don’t have to say much to them”.

The ‘Cats are back in action on Sunday when they travel to Rhode Island to take on Bryant. UNH is now 11-7 overall and 1-2 in the America East Conference.