By Victor J. Dinia

The women’s volleyball team defeated Eastern Connecticut State University (ECSU) Friday night (3-0) and Ithaca College Saturday morning (3-1) in the second and quarterfinal rounds of the NCAA Division III Women’s Volleyball Tournament to win the Eastern Region title and move on to the semifinals.

The Engineers downed ECSU 15-6, 15-9, 15-9, and Ithaca 12-15, 15-9, 15-14, 15-8 to advance to next weekend’s semifinals at the University of La Verne in La Verne, Calif.

The Engineers defeated a tough Ithaca College squad in the quarterfinal match, playing what MIT head coach Karyn Altman ’81 called the team’s best match of the year. The Engineers jumped out to an early 4-1 lead off the serving of Jenell Kauth ’85, Anella Munro ’85, and Barbara Wesslund ’84, the setting of Michelle Heng ’84, and the spiking of Lori Cantu ’85. Play soon became stoppage, however, and after a series of serves, spiking, and blocks by both teams, MIT fell behind 5-6.

MIT came back, with Munro and Jennifer Smith ’86 each serving for two points, only to have mistakes cost the Engineers the first game. The Bombers closed out the game 15-12.

The second game started out in a seesaw fashion with Ithaca matching Heng, Kauth, and Munro who served for four, two, and three points, respectively. Jennifer Smith then broke the game open, putting in three points in a row, before Cantu and Munro scored the game away 15-12.

Game three was another seesaw-style affair with the Bombers taking game one 15-12, the Engineers taking game two 15-10, the Bombers tying game three 15-12, the Engineers taking game four 15-8.

Game four got off to a sloppy start. Wesslund managed to score on five points by spikes from Cantu and Amy Smith, Heng added two and Koster one with the assistance of Kauth at the net. Heng, facing an 8-5 deficit, added two more points, capitalizing on MIT mistakes, but Kauth added three of her own as Munro, Koster, and Wesslund controlled the net. Ithaca’s Rhonda Faunce proved that although her team was down 11-8, the Bombers still had some life left. Faunce served for five points in a row, with Ithaca leading 11-8. Jennifer Smith added one for the Engineers and the score remained 12-8, as both teams showed the style of volleyball that brought them to the quarterfinals. Cantu and Amy Smith pounded Ithaca with rocket spikes, but Faunce countered with some firepower of her own. Cantu got some help from Munro at the net and broke the stalemate, serving for two points and breaking MIT within one of winning the match. Heng fell short, Heng and Munro spiked; as Ithaca player went under the net attempting to block Munro’s hit, and the Engineers took the game, 15-8, and the match.

“This was a great match,” said Ithaca head coach Jeff Babler. “It calls MIT a ‘powerful team.”

“We played our best defense against their best spiker,” he added.

Ithaca had “tough serving and the best defense we’ve seen yet,” according to Altman. She credited the Engineers’ hitters’ efforts and the defense of Wesslund and Kauth. “We kept the game going with serve.”

Co-captain Joe Pressing ’84 of the Engineers breaks through the finish line, winning his heat of the 56-meter dash in the New Athletic Center on Saturday.

The trio of Dave Richards ’86, Dan Lin ’86, and Pressing took the first, second, and fourth places, respectively in the 500 meters. Their times were 2:05.20, 2:04.87, and 2:05.24, respectively.

The win was MIT’s, but it wasn’t easy. One sign of the players’ intensity was the lack of smiles present on the floor. In previous matches, smiles and occasional laughs often accompanied mistakes, but after the loss in game one, the Engineers knew that they could not treat this match lightly.

The vanquished Ithaca team had nothing to be ashamed of. Only four other teams had even won a game against MIT this year, and virtually no squad had fought so well.

Oh yes, the crowd. Never in recent memory has a crowd been so large and so into a sport event at MIT. Particularly notable.

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California here we come.

Our women’s volleyball team is on its way west to the NCAA semifinals after disposing of fifth-ranked Ithaca College Saturday. The most successful season in the squad’s, and possibly the school’s, athletic history comes to an end Saturday, and no matter what the outcome, 1983 has been an incredible year for the Engineers.

The key numbers are: forty-one, zero, and four. "Forty-one" corresponds to the number of foes who have been victims of the MIT steamer, while zero opponents have managed to come out on top. MIT is now a part of the Final Four, one of seventeen teams that窗帘 in volleyball on the Division III level. Quite impressive, to say the least.

Saturday’s large and enthusiastic crowd was treated to top-notch volleyball, and anyone who wasn’t a fan of this sport before was certainly converted. Most important, however, is that those who’ve been following MIT volleyball this year can look forward to an exciting future as the Engineers take the next step.

There was no question that the Bombers came to play. They came to play with the same intensity they showed in the last contest, and they proved that although her team was down 11-3, the Bombers still had some life left. Faunce served for five points in a row, with Ithaca leading 11-8. Jennifer Smith added one for the Engineers and the score remained 12-8, as both teams showed the style of volleyball that brought them to the quarterfinals. Cantu and Amy Smith pounded Ithaca with rocket spikes, but Faunce countered with some firepower of her own. Cantu got some help from Munro at the net and broke the stalemate, serving for two points and breaking MIT within one of winning the match. Heng fell short, Heng and Munro spiked; as Ithaca player went under the net attempting to block Munro’s hit, and the Engineers took the game, 15-8, and the match.

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