NEW8 first round: Spikers dump WPI

By David Rothstein

The volleyball team began its defense of the New England Women’s Eight Conference championships title with a lackluster, if decisive, three-game win over the Worcester Polytechnic Institute yesterday evening at du Pont Gymnasium.

The hosting Engineers defeated the visiting Engineers — the teams share a common name — 15-7, 15-7, 15-1 in the opening round of the NEW8 tournament, and will face either Mount Holyoke College or Smith College in the tournament’s semi-final match, to be held Saturday at noon at Smith.

WPI hardly belonged on the court with MIT, but Tech played gracious host by allowing WPI to rally at several points during the match, and even lead (yes, lead) MIT at one point in the first game.

MIT, which finished its regular season Wednesday evening with a 3-1 loss to Bentley College, lacked the intensity it had displayed in defeating WPI two weeks earlier, as off-the-mark receiving and hitting by MIT allowed WPI more than its share of points.

Despite the slowish win, there appeared to be no reason to doubt MIT’s ability to win the NEW8 title for a second straight year, as the Engineers have had little competition throughout the season from their NEW8 rivals.

MIT head coach Karyn Altman ’78 noted that MIT’s lack of intensity, “is something I’d prefer not to happen,” but she did not appear unduly concerned by her team’s performance.

“My main concern,” she said, “is that we started out slowly.”

MIT did start slowly in the first game, allowing WPI to take a 6-5 lead before an Altman timeout spurred a 7-0 MIT run en route to the 15-7 win. Freshman Colleen Kaiser got a rare start, playing the back row and serving well while setter Debbie Rego ’91 connected with team captain Cindy Parrish ’92 in the middle on a few quick-offense attacks.

The second game saw MIT run out to a 13-0 lead before the host Engineers ground to a halt, and watched as WPI pulled off a couple of Keystone Cop rallies to score seven straight points. MIT was plagued particularly by its poor passing, which continually sent Rego scrambling.

Not to be outdone, WPI — after narrowing MIT’s lead to 13-7 — served long and promptly came up with two kill errors to give MIT the victory.

Game No. 3 went a bit more smoothly for MIT, which ran up a 7-0 lead, gave up one point to WPI, and then trotted off to a 15-1 victory.

Altman sat Rego and elected for a 4-2 offense, with junior Stephanie Coleman and Colleen Johnson ’93 sharing setting duties.

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