

Hartman, Sherman settle for 3rd place

Written by Tom Fruehling

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IOWA CITY - After four years of playing in the top echelon of prep tennis, Washington senior Lilly Hartman knows the ups and downs of her sport.

Fortune can turn at the drop of a topspin.

When she and sophomore doubles partner Hannah Sherman forged a first-set 5-3 lead in their semifinal match of the Class 2A girls state championships Friday morning, they looked to be in complete control.

Besides her competitive spirit, Hartman's strength is her rocket serve. But with the opening set on the line, a gritty duo from Urbandale broke Hartman's serve to stay alive and won the next three games as well to pull out a 7-5 comeback victory.

With the wind in their sails, Abby Reis and Brynn Reichardt of Urbandale coasted to six relatively easy second-set wins to seal the match.

In all, they won the final 10 straight games.

"Momentum is definitely a cruel thing," a disappointed Hartman said after the match. "We came out really strong. But I think when we lost that first set, we started second-guessing ourselves."

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“They got more aggressive, and we got more defensive. They’re solid, a really good 1-2 combo. And they really upped their game.”

Broke but not beaten, however, Hartman and Sherman put the semifinal loss behind them and rallied back to defeat Katie Melbourne and Allison Miller of Pleasant Valley, 7-5, 6-2, Friday afternoon to claim third place in the state at the University of Iowa courts.

“We wanted to make the top four,” noted Hartman, marking her third state doubles appearance in a row.

Teammate Sherman, making her state tournament debut, acknowledged that jitters may have had something to do with the semifinal collapse.

“I usually rip my ground strokes,” she said. “But when we got behind, I got way too tentative. It kind of got to my head.”

Still, for this one match anyway, once the momentum shifted there was little doubt which was the better team. “They played better than we did,” Hartman admitted.

For the Urbandale pair, who finished fifth last year and lost in the finals Friday afternoon to Mary Hill and Eren Sagun of Des Moines Roosevelt, it was a matter of fighting back.

“I think we showed some mental toughness,” said sophomore slugger Reis. “And after winning

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that first set our confidence really shot up. We just kept it going from there.”

The Washington girls will be back on the Iowa City courts Saturday morning, one of four schools competing for the state team championship.

They face undefeated Des Moines Roosevelt at 9 a.m. and Sherman said they’ll be ready.

“It’s going to be hard,” she pointed out. “They’re extremely solid and deep. We’ll have to play out of our minds.”