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Volleyball Gives Undefeated South Carolina All it Can Handle In Five-Set Thriller

The Eagles took SC to just their second five-set match of the season

STATESBORO – Katie Bange, Cathrine Murray, Stephanie Spencer and Kendra Koetter each recorded a double-double Saturday evening in front of a raucous crowd, leading the Georgia Southern volleyball in a five-set thriller against an undefeated South Carolina team. The Gamecocks were ultimately able to escape Hanner Fieldhouse with a 3-2 win, but the Eagles gave a good showing and kept the Gamecocks on their heels the entire time.

Entering Saturday's match, the Gamecocks (9-0) had given up just three sets all season, including two to Wake Forest on Friday, but the Eagles (6-5) didn't let that intimidate them as they took the second and fourth sets in a wild affair.

Murray led the way for Georgia Southern with 14 kills to go along with 15 digs while Bange and Lauren Reichard each tallied 12 kills. Bange, who also had a team-best 29
assists, hit a solid .333 for the match while Reichard hit .385 and added eight blocks. Spencer rounded out the quartet of Eagles to have double-digit kills with 11 to go with 11 digs. Reichard and Bange were named to the all-tournament team. Koetter ended the match with 23 assists and 10 digs.

The Story
Trailing 6-2 in the fifth set, Georgia Southern came storming back to a 12-10 lead with the help of two kills and two blocks by Reichard. South Carolina closed the set out on a 5-1 run to claim the match. With the Gamecocks leading 14-13, Koko Atoa-Williams hit the ball into the block of Bange, but the ball was called out of bounds on the SC side of the net.

Down 1-0 in the match, Georgia Southern powered to a 25-16 second-set win by hitting .324 as a team compared to just .083 by the Gamecocks. Alex Beecher, who had a match-high 24 digs, gave the Eagles the lead in the set for good at 8-7 with a service ace and GS never looked back.

Following the intermission, the Gamecocks took the third set 25-18, but GS bounced back in the fourth set, claiming a back-and-forth shootout at 27-25. With the Eagles down 24-23, Anna Wenger delivered a huge kill to tie the score 24-24, but SC took the next point at 25-24. Not giving up, Spencer hit a line drive down the left line to tie it back up at 25-25 before Bange ricocheted a kill off a pair of Gamecocks to set up a GS set point. A block assist from Bange and Reichard sealed the frame and sent the match to a fifth set.

Quotable from head coach Dustin Wood
"It was a back and forth night. They made some plays and we made some plays. It was good volleyball; we just came up short in the end. I'm proud of my kids and the way they fought. They played really good ball this weekend."

"You just can't start a fifth set down 6-2. We came out a little bit tentative, but we settled in and made a nice run. Unfortunately, it didn't go our way but it was fun to be part of that match. It's a tough one to swallow, but we'll learn from it."

Next up
Georgia Southern will close out the current homestand by hosting North Florida Tuesday, Sept.13. The match against the Ospreys is slated for a 6 p.m. start.

Georgia Southern Athletics provides up-to-date information on all its sports through its official website, GSEagles.com, through social media channels facebook.com/GSAthletics, twitter.com/GSAthletics, iOS app Georgia Southern Eagles and Android app Eagles GATA. Fans can purchase tickets to Georgia Southern Athletics events by visiting GSEagles.com/Tickets.

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