

South Florida stops FSU's victory streak

By Rodney Campbell

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After 17 matches spread over 47 days, the streak is over.

The South Florida Lady Bulls ended Florida State's winning streak Friday night at Tully Gym, beating the Lady Seminoles 3-15, 15-8, 15-13, 15-12. It was the first time that FSU, 20-3, lost since a Sept. 3 meeting with Minnesota.

South Florida, which also beat Jacksonville on Friday, is 11-12. FSU defeated South Alabama 15-8, 15-10, 15-9 on Friday afternoon to give Coach Cecile Reynaud her 398th career victory.

The Lady Seminoles carried some of that momentum into the evening match and looked as though they would match their best start since 1983, when they were 21-2. Paced by the play of Maggie Philgence, Gabrielle Reece and Sonia Trevino, FSU raced out to a quick lead in the match.

But it was to be the last game the Lady Seminoles would win against the Lady Bulls. South Florida hadn't beaten FSU in 24 previous meetings, though the last one went five games in the Florida Eight Classic in Tampa last month.

"I think South Florida just started to play well," Reynaud said. "I think South Florida plays some of their best volleyball when they play us."

Lady Bulls coach Debbie Richardson admitted it was the best her team had played all season. Her team did it without two fifth-year seniors, Nikki Richt, who was sick, and Belinda Spivey, who was suspended.

Her team rallied around that fact and pulled the upset. The Lady Seminoles received votes for the top 20 poll this week.

"These guys have confidence that they can do it," Richardson said. "I saw a desire and will to win tonight."

FSU led 11-2 in the third game before losing 13 of the last 15 points. The visitors started to block Philgence's powerful shots at the net to eliminate a good portion of the Lady Seminoles' attack. Philgence, who had 22 kills in the South Alabama match, wound up with 11 against South Florida.

South Florida outside hitter Crystal Maracle came alive in the fifth game. Maracle, who finished the match with a game-high 15 kills, got an important dig and kill in the final game to put her team ahead to stay at 5-4.

The loss also kept Reynaud from getting a shot at her 400th career victory today in an 11 a.m. match against Alabama-Birmingham. The FSU coach can now attain that goal as soon as next Wednesday in a Metro Conference match at Memphis State.