



# FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

## DEPARTMENT OF ATHLETICS



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### ELITE EIGHT BOUND! FSU MEN'S TENNIS UPSETS NO. 5 ILLINOIS AT NCAA TOURNAMENT

**COLLEGE STATION, Texas** - They say in Texas that everything is bigger, including the upsets. The Florida State University men's tennis team continued to make history as the No. 18 Seminoles upset No. 5 Illinois 4-2 on Saturday (May 21) to advance to the Elite Eight of the NCAA Tournament.

The victory sets up a rematch with in-state rival Florida at 4 p.m. (CDT) at the Mitchell Tennis Center on the campus of Texas A&M University. The Gators won the regular season tilt 4-3 on February 6 in Tallahassee. Florida State, who is making its first appearance in school history at the final site, improved its record to 21-7 on the year as it redeemed itself after a 5-2 loss to the Fighting Illini in January. Florida State is just the fourth unseeded team to win its Sweet 16 match since the tournament went to 64 teams in 1999. Illinois ended its season 25-4.

"All week I've been selling the guys on the fact that everyone has been coming up to us and congratulating us on just making it here, but we're not satisfied with just showing up," FSU head coach **Dwayne Hultquist** said. "We came together late in the year, made a little run in the ACC, then beat Kentucky last week and we faced a great Illinois team and really fought today."

After taking a 3-2 advantage in the team standings, the estimated crowd of over 500 at the Stadium Courts focused its attention on the number one match between the Seminoles' No. 26 **Mat Cloer** (Brevard, N.C.) and 23rd-ranked GD Jones of Illinois.

Early in it appeared that the two-time ACC Player of the Year would run away with the match as he won 6-1 in the first set, but Jones battle back to take the second 6-4. Despite breaking Jones for 1-0 and 3-2 leads, Cloer had to hold serve at 6-5 to force a tiebreaker.

Jones's only lead came at 1-0 in the tiebreaker as Cloer broke for 3-2 lead the held for a 4-2 advantage. The Illini won the next two points to tie at four, but Cloer broke back then held for a 6-4 lead. A forehand winner gave Cloer the 7-5 win in the tiebreaker and his first singles victory in the team portion of the NCAA Tournament.

"This is just way too cool," Cloer said. "I'm still trying to get a grip on things. GD played a great match and I was lucky to squeak out of there with a victory. It was a great team victory today and everyone deserves the credit. All of us were able to get a win between singles and doubles."

For the second match in a row the Seminoles relied on a tiebreaker at number one to secure the doubles point. There were no breaks of serve during the entire match as **Chris Westerhof** (Durban, South Africa) held serve to push the match to a tiebreaker.

Florida State grabbed the early advantage, but Illinois broke **Jeff Groslimond** (Atlanta, Ga.) twice then won both of Ryan Rowe's serve for the 4-1 lead, but that's when the junior duo dug in. Westerhof won both of his points then the Seminoles broke Kevin Anderson twice for a 5-4 lead. Groslimond closed out the match by holding both of his serves for the 7-4 win in the tiebreaker and 9-8 (4) in the match.

Also repeating last week's performance against Kentucky, the No. 40 tandem of Cloer and **Ytai Abougzir** (Boca Raton, Fla.) were the first ones off the court. They picked up the first break in the match to go up 7-5 then Abougzir held for the victory. At number three, **Jonathas Sucupira** (Sao Paulo, Brazil) and **Sam Chang** (Young-Ming, Taiwan) were down a break at 6-7 when their match with Chris Martin and Jones was halted. After winning the doubles point it appeared as Florida State would run away with the team match. Cloer, Sucupira and **Chip Webb** (Chattanooga, Tenn.) all ran out to 6-1 victories in their opening set and Abougzir's victory in the first stanza gave FSU four of the first six sets.

However, the NCAA Champion from 2003 was not going to roll over. Illinois battled back and reversed the trend, winning the second set in three of the four matches that Florida State had won the opener. The Seminoles did get one back in their favor as Westerhof rallied to take his second set with Monte Tucker.

"I told our guys that it was going to take two runs to win this match and that's what happened," Hultquist added. "The first run was when we won double and then jumped out on them in singles. They're a great team and we knew they'd make a run at us but our guys really stepped it up when we needed them to."

In the other two matches the teams split a pair of straight-set victories. Tying the match at one point apiece was Illinois' Anderson as he beat Groslimond 7-5, 6-4 at number three. Taking the lead back for the Seminoles was the senior Webb as he won a second set tiebreaker 8-6 for the 6-1, 7-6 (4) triumph against Martin. All that remained was a quartet of three set matches.

Evening the score at two was eighth-ranked DeHeart as he rallied to beat Abougzir 4-6, 6-3, 6-2. After being broken to tie the match at four-all in the third set, Sucupira came through with a break of his own for the 5-4

lead then held serve for the 6-1, 5-7, 6-4, win over Ruben Gonzales. When Cloer finished the match, Westerhof was down 5-4 on serve in the third set.

"Jonathas really stepped it up and that was a huge victory for us because it put us up 3-2 with two matches to play," Hultquist added. "Then Mat came through with the big win over Jones, to have your senior captain step up like that speaks volume. Since I've been here we haven't had a player work as hard as Mat and today was the culmination of all the years of hard work that he's put in."

Despite their regional proximity, this will only be the second meeting between Florida State and Florida in the NCAA Tournament. The Gators won the second round match-up in 2003 4-0 in Gainesville. UF advanced by beating South Carolina 4-0.

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## **No. 18 Florida State 4, No. 5 Illinois 2**

### **Box Score**

#### **Singles**

- No. 1: #26 Mat Cloer (FSU) def. #23 GD Jones (ILL) 6-1, 4-6, 7-6 (5)
- No. 2: #8 Ryler DeHeart (ILL) def. Ytai Abougzir (FSU) 4-6, 6-3, 6-1
- No. 3: #51 Kevin Anderson (ILL) def. Jeff Groslimond (FSU) 6-4, 6-1
- No. 4: Chris Westerhof (FSU) vs. Monte Tucker (ILL) 3-6, 6-3, 4-5 DNF
- No. 5: Jonathas Sucupira (FSU) def. Ruben Gonzales (ILL) 6-1, 5-7, 6-4
- No. 6: Chip Webb (FSU) def. Chris Martin (ILL) 6-1, 7-6 (6)

**Order of Finish: 3, 6, 2, 6, 1**

#### **Doubles:**

- No. 1: Groslimond/Westerhof (FSU) def. Anderson/Ryan Rowe (ILL) 9-8 (4)
- No. 2: #40 Cloer/Abougzir (FSU) def. DeHeart/Pramond Dabir (ILL) 8-5
- No. 3: Sucupira/Sam Chang (FSU) vs. Martin/Jones (ILL) 6-7 DNF

**Order of Finish: 2, 1**