

Men's Tennis Rallies To Hold Off Rice, 4-3

The Seminoles battle Texas A&M on Thursday

March 8, 2006

HOUSTON -- The 57th-ranked Rice men's upset bid came just short as 35th-ranked Florida State rallied for a 4-3 win in dual-match action that lasted more than four hours Wednesday at the Jake Hess Tennis Stadium. The Seminoles improved to 7-6 on the season and won consecutive matches for the first time this season after defeating South Florida Monday. Rice dropped to 5-5.

"This was our most significant win of the year," Florida State head coach [Dwayne Hultquist](#) said. "We had to hang on as a team after falling behind 3-0. [Maciek Sykut](#), [Chris Cloer](#) and [Ytai Abougzir](#) recorded wins and it came down to the No. 2 court. Sam was down 3-1 in the third set...and he brought it home. Rice is a good team and this was probably our most noteworthy victory of the season."

Florida State freshmen [Andrew Bailey](#) and [Maciek Sykut](#) won their second straight doubles match at number two, defeating the Owls' Rodrigo Gabriel and Ralph Knupfer, 8-2. Rice's Robert Searle and Tony Haerle evened the score with an 8-6 win against [Ytai Abougzir](#) and [Chris Westerhof](#) at number one. Rice's Ben Harknett and Christoph Müller then rallied from a 4-1 deficit to beat FSU's [Jonathas Sucupira](#) and [Sam Chang](#) 9-8 (7) to claim the doubles point.

The Owls held on to the momentum early in singles as Harknett scored a 6-3, 6-4 victory over Sucupira at the two position. Haerle then put Rice up 3-0 with his 6-4, 6-2 win against Westerhof at number four. Florida State began chipping away at the Rice lead with a pair of straight-set wins at five and six singles. First, Cloer logged his second win in a row with a 6-4, 6-3 victory over Jason Mok at No. 6. Sykut then extended his winning streak to six straight matches with a 6-4, 7-5 route over Christoph Muller in the fifth slot. The Seminoles' Abougzir then held off Searle at the top spot for a 7-5, 3-6, 6-3 decision sending all eyes to number three for the deciding match. Rice's Ralph Knupfer and FSU's Chang battled back and forth before Chang rallied late in the second set to force a third, then held on for a 4-6, 7-5, 6-3 win to give the Seminoles the team victory.

Florida State continues its trek across Texas with a 7pm match against Texas A&M Thursday. The contest will be the home opener for the Aggies.

Results

No. 35 Florida State 4, No. 57 Rice 3

Doubles

1. Searle/Haerle (RU) def. Abougzik/Westerhof (FSU), 8-6
2. Drew Bailey/Sykut (FSU) def. Rodrigo Gabriel/Knupfer (RU), 8-2
3. Müller/Harknett (RU) def. Sucupira/Chang (FSU), 9-8 (7)

Singles

1. [Ytai Abougzir](#) (FSU) def. Robert Searle (RU), 7-5, 3-6, 6-3
2. Ben Harknett (RU) def. [Jonathas Sucupira](#) (FSU), 6-3, 6-4
3. [Sam Chang](#) (FSU) def. Ralph Knupfer (RU), 4-6, 7-5, 6-3
4. Tony Haerle (RU) def. [Chris Westerhof](#) (FSU), 6-4, 6-2
5. [Maciek Sykut](#) (FSU) def. Christoph Müller (RU), 6-4, 7-5
6. [Chris Cloer](#) (FSU) def. Jason Mok (RU), 6-4, 6-3

Order of Finish: D2, D1, D3, S2, S4, S6, S5, S1, S3*