

GIRLS' TENNIS STATE TOURNAMENT

Friendship put on pause

CLASS 2A Copeland's repeat in singles came against a close friend and an Edina teammate.

By JIM HILLMAN jim.hillman@startribune.com

A half-hour before their championship match Friday, Class 2A singles finalist Nicole Copeland and Andrea Jansson were hanging out together, having just had lunch, talking and smiling and enjoying each other's company.

Friends and teammates, soon to be foes. Setting aside that friendship proved difficult, however. The Edina teammates battled inconspicuously, largely stemming from mutual affection, before Copeland, the defending state champion, took control and pulled out a 6-4, 6-4 victory at Baseline Tennis Center at the University of Minnesota.

"We're such good friends," Copeland said. "Before the match, we had lunch and we were having normal conversations. I flipped the switch when we got to the court. But then right after the match, we went back to being friends."

The two players were so close that Edina coach Steve Padden felt the need to speak to either during changovers. "No, we stayed away. A long way away," Padden said with a laugh. For Jansson, a senior who joined the team last year after her family's arrival from her native Sweden, familiarity and a sense of nerves along with Copeland's power game proved too big a rift to overcome.

"There were a lot of people here," Jansson said. "I've never played in front of that many before. In the beginning, I was like 'Well, I'm not going to think about it, but it's a wash.'"

Having played each other so often over the years, there were no surprises to be had. The difference was execution as Jansson struggled to finish her game in the first set.

"She was putting a lot of pressure on me and I was missing way too easily," Jansson said. "And she doesn't miss." Jansson rallied in the second set, winning three consecutive games to cut the deficit to 5-4, but Copeland was able to close out the match. A small fan pump and a hug for Jansson sufficed for celebration.

Copeland became the seventh player in team history to win consecutive titles. This one, she said, was more difficult.



Nicole Copeland, right, hugged Edina teammate and friend Andrea Jansson after beating her in a straight set for the Class 2A championship.

"There was a lot more pressure on me this year," Copeland said. "I had a target on my back. It was more stressful. Not when I was on the court, but when I went to bed, I'd be thinking 'OK, this is the final. This is where it matters.'"

When the match was over and the stress had dissipated and the finalist had shared a high-five, Copeland compared the two titles. She found they're not much different.

"It's kind of the same feeling as last year," she said. "It hasn't really sunk in, but it's really good."

In the doubles final, Hopkins senior Rachel Kelly and Madeline Sak found back from a first-set loss to defeat Mounds View sisters Taylor and Paige Trondsen 6-2, 6-0, 6-1.

Junior moves past settling for second

CLASS 1A Arlina Shen won her first singles crown, after a string of runner-up finishes.

By HEATHER BELE Special to the Star Tribune

Forget jewelry or flowers. How about a state championship as a sweet 16 birthday gift?

That's what Edina junior Arlina Shen earned with a 6-4, 6-4 victory in the Class 1A girls' tennis singles final on her 16th birthday.

"That was my first birthday celebration. That was my first time trying to think about playing for three years in a row. So I'm just glad that the match is over and I won."

Last year, Shen shed tears of frustration and sadness after falling short. But this time, playing Friday at Reed-Sweatt Family Tennis Center in Mendota Heights, she found a way in a highly competitive match against No. 2 seed Kaitlyn Kalkbrenner of Trinity School at River Ridge in Engen.

The tears remained — this time, the reason more joyful. "At the same time, I was also really tense and nervous during those match points," said Shen. "I felt the tournament 'looped.' So I think in the end when I won the match, I just let all my emotions out."

Leading 5-3 in the second set with Malvey serving, Shen had three match points she couldn't convert. Shen said afterward she thought of her second-place finishes when the match points came up. She even showed some frustration at times on the court, something out of the ordinary for Shen, according to Blake coach Mike Aft.

"You could see she wanted it so bad," Aft said. "That's three years being a runner-up in a row. That builds."

Shen served out the match, clutching the title when a Malvey backhand shot sailed wide. It ended a match filled with fast groundstrokes, long rallies and eight deuce games.

Shen was down love-40 and fought off five other game points before getting the break for a 3-0 lead in the first set during the longest game of the match. Another highlight for the large crowd gathered on court when Malvey had set up in the second set to get within 5-3, taking the game with a 10-shot rally.

"So much of it is just trying to not think about the score," Malvey said. "It was just such fun tennis."

Doubles champion goes back-to-back. Palen and junior Natalie Allison won their second consecutive Class 1A doubles crown for Rochester Lourdes. As for the seeds, they defeated the tournament's top seed, No. 1 seed Kaitlyn Kalkbrenner of Trinity School at River Ridge, senior Shanna Kimmy and sophomore Avery Schubert, 6-2, 6-1.

Three section semifinals among many get close look

Section semifinals from Class 5A to Nine-Man take place Saturday, offering a slate full of compelling matchups. Staff writers Jim Paulsen and David La Vaque ruminate on three of those games.

IRONDALE (7-2) AT SPRING LAKE PARK (6-2), 2 P.M. Jim says: A rematch of the season opener, with Spring Lake Park 53-13. Irondale has enough offensive firepower to stay competitive, but the defense is vulnerable to a second ground attack. Guess what Spring Lake Park does well? RB Deric Bergman is as slippery as they come.

SPRING LAKE PARK 10, Irondale 21 David says: Irondale running back Parker Freeberg is the program's career rushing leader and provides an ideal play-off football conversation. But the Knights are a little less so after their victory Tuesday, making physical Spring Lake Park a bad matchup. **Spring Lake Park 28, Irondale 14**

MANKATO WEST (8-1) AT CHANHASSEN (8-2), 3 P.M. Jim says: Can Chanhasseen finally defeat Mankato West? The Storm has lost all five previous meetings between the two teams. Both teams' heart and soul is in Mankato West — Chanhasseen's Cole Plath and Mankato West's Clay Herling — but the Scatters counter with more offensive weapons. **Mankato West 27, Chanhasseen 20**

David says: When it comes to Chanhasseen, so much depends on QB Jacob Miller's status. He missed the regular season finale because of injury, and the offense struggled if Miller can't go. Then the Storm must get more from backup Tyson Hanson and his playmakers. **Chanhasseen 24, Mankato West 21**

ORONO (6-3) VS. SMB WOLFPACK (8-0), AT BLAKE, 7 P.M. Jim says: SMB took a hit when top WR Terry Lockett left Minnesota Academy for Spine Academy in suburban Cleveland. The Wolfpack still has QB Jake Suggs, LB Kaden Johnson and LB/WB Craig McDonald. And perhaps motivation. Orono matched the Wolfpack 36-14 in the 2017 playoffs. **SMB 34, Orono 22**

David says: Orono escaped on Tuesday despite five turnovers. The Wolfpack will feast on such sloppiness. When the Spartans are on, CB Nick Frenette runs and throws well. The defense, especially end Danny Suggs, can put heat on Suggs in the passing game. **Orono 27, SMB 21**

ROUNDUP

Rosemount stifles Stillwater in win

Rosemount used a stifling defense to outlast Stillwater 27-14 in the first round of the Class 6A state tournament on Friday.

The Irish limited the Ponies to 47 yards in 42 offensive plays and forced seven Stillwater turnovers.

The early points of the game came midway through the first quarter when Trevor Armstrong threw a 22-yard TD pass to Cadin Rudell and Nathan Whiting kicked the PAT.

The Irish will play host to Minnesota's 27, Anoka 8, Ben Tolkinen ran for two touchdowns and Hunter Wehling returned an interception for a TD to lead the Skippers past the Irondules. Tolkinen's 50-yard TD run and Wehling's 20-yard interception return helped the Skippers build a 9-0 lead in the first quarter. Tolkinen's 28-yard TD run in the second quarter extended Minnesota's lead to 17-0. On the night, Tolkinen gained 90 yards in five carries.

FOOTBALL RESULTS/SCHEDULE

FRIDAY

Irondale 27, Stillwater 14; Rosemount 27, Stillwater 14; Mankato West 27, Chanhasseen 20; Spring Lake Park 28, Irondale 14; Orono 22, SMB 34; Chanhasseen 24, Mankato West 21; SMB 34, Orono 22.

SATURDAY

Irondale 27, Stillwater 14; Rosemount 27, Stillwater 14; Mankato West 27, Chanhasseen 20; Spring Lake Park 28, Irondale 14; Orono 22, SMB 34; Chanhasseen 24, Mankato West 21; SMB 34, Orono 22.

SUNDAY

Irondale 27, Stillwater 14; Rosemount 27, Stillwater 14; Mankato West 27, Chanhasseen 20; Spring Lake Park 28, Irondale 14; Orono 22, SMB 34; Chanhasseen 24, Mankato West 21; SMB 34, Orono 22.



Mounds View's Brian Tebbert (41) jumped to pull an interception near the end of the first half, projecting a lead against Burnville. The Mustangs went on to win 17-10.

Table with columns for Game, Score, and Time. Includes results for Irondale vs Stillwater, Rosemount vs Stillwater, Mankato West vs Chanhasseen, Spring Lake Park vs Irondale, Orono vs SMB, Chanhasseen vs Mankato West, SMB vs Orono, and various other matchups across different classes and times.