

Whitman College



Come-backs galore in title victory

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Women's Tennis

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McMINNVILLE, Ore. Never count Whitman's women out.

Never.

Just don't do it.

Several times throughout Sunday's title match at the 2017 Northwest Conference Women's Tennis Tournament the 24th-ranked Blues were on the ropes, knees buckling. But each time they battled back, stood tall again, and eventually earned a 5-3 victory over host and No. 29 Linfield College to win the league's automatic berth into the NCAA 2017 national tournament.

Trailing by one, and behind 2-1 in the No. 3 doubles match? [Lori Sheng](#) and [Jenna Gilbert](#) pull out a win.

Trailing 5-0 in the opening set at 2-singles? [Mary Hill](#) reels off wins in 13 of the next 14 games for a win.

All square after dropping the second set with a thudding 6-1 loss at 3-singles? [Allie Wallin](#) rolls in the third for a win.

And with the crown within reach, but trailing 2-1, 4-2, 4-3 and 5-4 in the opening set at No.5 singles? Sheng wins three games in a row to rally for a set win, then rolls through the second set, 6-2, to capture the match- and championship-clinching point.

And so it went for the never-say-die Blues on Sunday.

Ironically, earlier in the season in a home match for Whitman it was the Wildcats that bounced back for victory as Linfield won the final two singles matches to rally from a 4-3 deficit to steal a 5-4 win from the host Blues.

Sounding prescient on Saturday after Whitman's 5-2 semifinal victory over Lewis & Clark College, head coach [John Hein](#) stated "we're really happy...but we're also really looking forward to a rematch with Linfield (Sunday)."

He knew.

He knew Sheng and Gilbert could bounce back for their 8-5 win over Marisa Doveri and Michelle Ly.

Maybe needing the smelling salts for Hill? No, he knew his superb sophomore had the wherewithal and ability to rally as she did for a 7-5, 6-1 momentum-changing victory over Elsa Harris.

Wallin? The senior that twice before...TWICE...has earned the NWC tournament-clinching point for her Blues, and someone who has accumulated more than 100 victories to join the program's Century Club? Hein knew -- likely, didn't even need to watch -- her bounce-back in Wallin's 6-4, 1-6, 6-2 triumph over Doveri.

And not to get lost in the shuffle in the Phoenix-type day for Whitman, Hein knew he had all-conference performer [Hanna Greenberg](#) at No. 4 singles, where she brought Whitman to the brink of the championship with a 6-2, 6-4 win over Linfield's Basia Kopecka.

And finally, he knew a now-seasoned Sheng -- playing in twice as many dual matches in a sophomore season this year than in her first season -- could battle back with the match on the line.

On March 12 in a home match against Lewis & Clark it was Sheng that, down a set, rallied for second- and third-set wins in singles play to win the match point in a 5-4 victory over the Pioneers.

On Sunday her victim was Riley Clayeux, and on Sunday her rally was even sweeter than that day back in March.

Heading into the NCAA tournament Hein knows he's got some special players in the slots that didn't earn points against Linfield, too.

Conference newcomer of the year [Andrea Gu](#) took Linfield's Ella Riddle, ranked 21st in the nation in singles play, to the brink at 1-singles, falling to the nationally-ranked player in three sets, 7-6(7-4), 3-6, 7-5.

And though his Nos. 1 and 2 doubles pairings weren't victorious Sunday, Gu and Greenberg at the top of the ladder lost for the first time since being put together four matches ago. And Wallin and Hill only felt defeat Sunday after a 9-8(7-2) tiebreak loss at 2-doubles.

Call it a Phoenix-like performance, or a never-say-die attitude.

Or, just simply call it Whitman women's tennis.

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