

## Magical day at H-DN singles

Erik Fraser, The Times-Standard  
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EUREKA - Somebody needs to get the North Coast Section commissioner on the phone, quick.

Because both Del Norte's Emma Wilson and St. Bernard's Catherine Macan deserve to go to the NCS singles tennis tournament.

Wilson will be the one whose name is on the brackets, though, by virtue of her 6-4, 4-6, 7-6 (9-7) victory over Macan in Saturday's Humboldt-Del Norte Conference No. 1 singles tournament final.

Wilson barely hung on against a tenacious Macan in a match that seemed like it would never end.

Not that that was a bad thing. It was a match for the ages, from the four deuces in the very first game, to the last point of the tiebreaker.

"I've been coaching and watching H-DN tennis for 27 years, and that was the best finals I've seen, boys or girls," said Macan's coach, Lee Friebel.

Macan battled back from 5-1 down in the third set to actually take a 6-5 lead. But Wilson had worked too hard to let this one slip away, and won the next game to force a tiebreaker.

She then prevailed 9-7 in the tiebreaker, punching her ticket to the NCS singles tournament.

"(Wilson)'s been undefeated all year, she played really well all year, but this was definitely the night she played her best all season," said Del Norte coach Sara Miller. "And Catherine played really well, she had me worried there for a second, but I thought Emma did very well."

As the third set unfolded, it looked like Wilson would breeze into NCS, as Macan seemed to hit a wall early after rallying to win the second set, committing several uncharacteristic unforced errors and falling behind 5-1 quickly.

"I think what happened was she finished the second set with a high level of adrenaline, focus and concentration," said Friebel. "If she hadn't taken the break (between sets), I think she'd have been better off. When she came out for the third set she started making unforced errors, which neither of

them had been doing during the match.”

But Macan fought off three consecutive match points in the next game, and three more in the following one. Gaining momentum, she tore through the next three games to take a 6-5 lead.

At that point, Wilson could have been overwhelmed by Macan's comeback, but she had come too far to let this one slip away, and she forced the tiebreaker, then outlasted Macan 9-7 to win.

The two had taken much different paths to the title game, and it was amazing that Macan even had any energy left at the end of the night.

Macan beat Fortuna's Karina Knapp 6-1, 6-2, and then had to survive a strong performance by North Coast Prep's Nina Gusenberger in the semis, winning 7-5, 2-6, 6-4, while Wilson had a first-round bye and had little trouble with Arcata's Ashley Balke in the semis, winning 6-1, 6-3.

But all that was long forgotten by the end of Wilson and Macan's epic battle.

Though the No. 1 singles champion is the only one that advances to NCS, there was a ton of other action on Saturday.

Arcata reminded everyone why they went undefeated as a team in league play, taking four of the six singles titles. In the No. 2 singles final, Liana Mitlyng-Day defeated Eureka's Laura Kramer 6-1, 7-6 (7-1).

In the No. 4 singles spot, Katie Erickson defeated Fortuna's Kylee Chandler 4-6, 6-4, 6-2 in the final.

In the No. 5 slot, Rhiannon Lewis-Stephenson downed Eureka's Sarah Knight 6-0, 6-1, and in the No. 6 spot, Jenny Durina defeated Eureka's Elise Adams 6-2, 6-4.

Fortuna's Niki Green took the No. 3 singles title, however, by rallying to defeat Arcata's Selina Bernard 4-6, 6-2, 6-3.

The H-DNC doubles championships will be held Friday at the Eureka Tennis Club. The No. 1 doubles champion also goes to the H-DNC tournament.

Arcata has already earned a trip to the NCS team tournament by winning the H-DNC.