

NBA lockout drags on as no deal is reached

NEW YORK (AP)—They've tried almost everything to end the NBA lockout, from secret negotiating sessions to private breakfasts to "unofficial" offers in stuffy back rooms.

They even tried going casual Saturday at the union's law office, showing up in some nice leather jackets.

But that didn't work either.

Now, it might be several more days before the league and the union meet again.

"There's no meeting today," NBA spokesman Brian McIntyre said Sunday, one day after a small negotiating session lasted fewer than 30 minutes and included the union informing commissioner David Stern and deputy commissioner Russ Granik where it was willing to make some movement.

The offer wasn't enough, and the parties soon walked off into the cold December air, their hopelessness plainly evident as they trudged through the cheery, bustling throngs of shoppers outside the famous FAO Schwartz toy store.

"No one knows what their schedule is," said union attorney Jeffrey Kessler, who had enough of a sense of

humor left to note that at least they hadn't ruined too much of a Saturday.

There was room for a little levity because there still is enough time to save the season. The top negotiators could decide to meet this week, or they could decide to put the process back on the slow track and settle in front of their television sets Friday night to watch agent David Falk's exhibition game from Atlantic City.

No one is quite sure which choice they'll make.

"It's very clear we don't have the basis for a deal between us or anything even close," Granik said. "It's clear we have very different ideals of what an appropriate deal should look like."

The quick departure from Saturday's session by Stern and Granik surprised many around the league, especially some on the ownership side who had been told after Thursday's secret negotiating session that a deal was close.

The union contingent seemed to think the same thing as it walked into Saturday's meeting hopeful that the sides would make enough progress to call back the full negotiating teams Tuesday or Wednesday to perhaps close the deal.

Nebraska advances to Final Four

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The drama reached a climax after a service error by Badger outside hitter Jenny Maastricht. Then, before Meendering could serve, Wisconsin was called for an illegal rotation and gave Nebraska a point to tie the match at 16-16.

The end came after two side outs, as sophomore outside hitter Kim Behrends served the final two points.

A match that could have been 2-0 Wisconsin was now 1-1 with Nebraska capturing the momentum, but not for long.

In the third game, NU jumped to a 5-3 lead, but thanks to the play of Badger freshman middle blocker Sherisa Livingston, Wisconsin would build a two-games-to-one lead on NU with a 15-9 win.

Livingston paced the Badgers with eight kills in the third game as the Huskers were one game from elimination for the second straight night.

Despite all of the trouble Nebraska was facing, Wisconsin senior setter Colleen Neels said she never felt the Huskers, while wounded, were near death.

"I don't really think we felt we had them," Neels said.

Neels, who along with Livingston was named to the Pacific Region All-Tournament team, was right.

The Huskers weren't had, and with the help of the NU Coliseum crowd of 4,271, NU's play began to reflect a team that was ranked No. 3 with a 32-1 record.

Wisconsin Coach John Cook recognized a turnaround in momentum during the fourth game when the Badgers were having trouble handling

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TERRY PETTIT
NU volleyball coach

the Huskers' serves.

"Jaime (Kronak) and Fiona (Nepo) and maybe Megan Korver really stuck some tough serves deep and caused us problems, and I think that really turned game four," Cook said.

Both teams hit a match-low .138 in the fourth game, and Pettit thought team depth became a factor toward the end of the match.

"I think what happened is that they finally wore out," Pettit said. "You can only play hard for so long."

With the fourth game in the Huskers' hands, the Badgers would be forced to beat Nebraska in the NU Coliseum in a rally-scoring fifth game. It hadn't happened since Sept. 4, 1992.

Junior Tonia Tauke, who had 6.5 blocks to go along with 15 kills, credited the crowd for coming to the Huskers' aid all night long.

"It felt like Penn State," Tauke said, referring to the 1996 Regional Final that the Huskers won in five games. "I think we owe a couple of our points to the crowd."

Meendering ended the fifth game with a kill, the same way she ended Friday night's regional semifinal with Pepperdine, a 16-14, 10-15, 14-16, 15-

1, 15-12 victory.

The Hull, Iowa, native finished with 27 kills on a school-record 78 attacks and was named the Most Outstanding Player of the Pacific Region.

Pettit called Meendering's performance courageous and said it was pretty obvious by the end of the match who was going to get the ball.

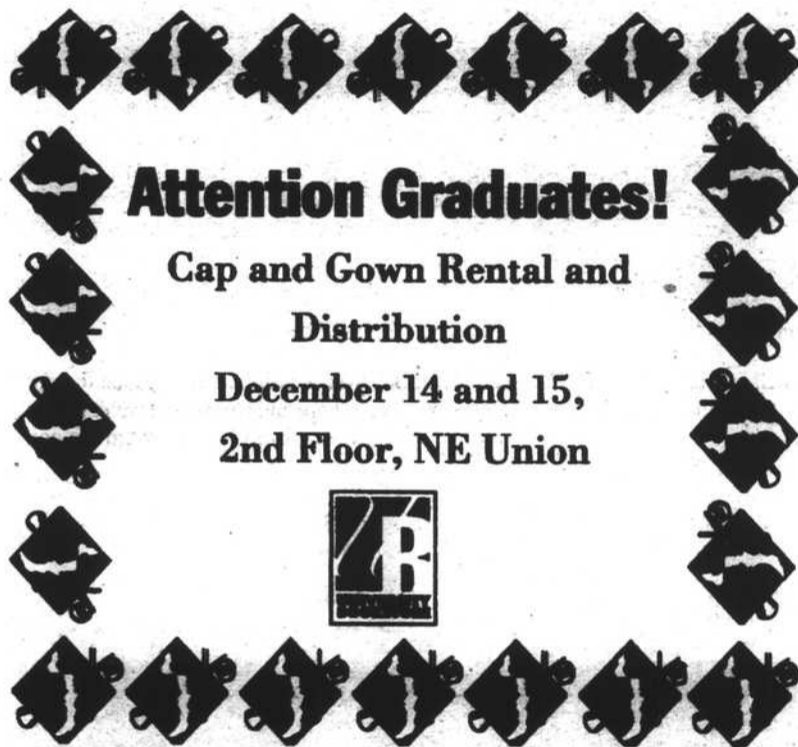
"When the match was on the line, she did what she had to do," Pettit said. "We knew it, they knew it, if everybody in the stands didn't know it, that's where the ball was going."

Now Meendering and the Huskers are going to the Final Four in Madison, Wis. It will be Nebraska's sixth overall appearance in the Final Four, which is the third most of any school.

After the match, Pettit, who fought back tears of joy, reminded his players how to handle the dramatic victory.

"I told our athletes to enjoy this," Pettit said. "But be humble about it, because you don't get many opportunities in sport to do what happened tonight."


The Huskers will no doubt enjoy the match and on Monday start preparation for the 34-0 Nittany Lions. Penn State was runner-up last season, losing to Stanford in the final.



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