



GOLD METTLE

Would you give up a spot in the Olympics for a friend? Would you let a friend give up her spot for you? Those questions have weighed heavily on Kay Poe since the events that unfolded May 20 at the U.S. tae kwon do trials.

In case you missed it: Poe, the gold medal favorite at 108 pounds, was headed for a final-round showdown against best friend Esther Kim. But Poe dislocated her left kneecap in winning her semi and had to be carried off the mat by her coach—Esther's father—Jin Won Kim. When Esther saw the agony on her opponent's face—her friend's face—she couldn't bear the thought of earning an Olympic berth by default. So she decided to forfeit the match.

It was a dramatic scene that has generated the kind of media attention usually reserved for swimmers and sprinters. Here was Poe, all of 18, reluctant to accept this most generous gesture. Here was Kim, the wise 20-year-old, insisting and then carrying her injured pal back to the mat, raising Poe's hand in victory as both broke down in tears. "For the first time in my life, I felt like a champion," Kim says.

But while Poe's knee is expected to heal by July, the guilt will not go away so soon. She thinks often about the final that wasn't, and she wonders if she should have somehow competed on one leg. "I kind of wish I would



Emotions still run high for Kim (left) and Poe.

have fought," Poe says quietly. "It's almost too much to accept, what she did."

Is the chance of a lifetime worth a lifetime of second-guessing? When asked what she would have done if the roles had been reversed, Kim falls silent. "I'd probably keep arguing with her," she says finally. "I think I would have fought." —ERIC ADELSON

Davis (left) and Johnson Jordan are a deeply religious duo—which helps explain their righteous run to the top.



BEACH PARTY

Annett Davis and Jenny Johnson Jordan go together like bump, set and spike

BY ANNE MARIE JEFFORDS

RAFER JOHNSON WAS standing before his two kids, grinning as only a former Olympic champion can grin. "Guess who gets to light the Olympic flame?" It was a rhetorical question, of course. But this was 1984, and Jenny Johnson was 12, and she might as well have told Dad to beat it. "I don't know," she answered, shrugging as only a 12-year-old can shrug. "Michael Jackson?"

Gold medals might not have meant as much to her as gold records back then, but that was before Jenny Johnson Jordan discovered the thrill of her own smash hits. When Jenny and best friend Annett Davis began the 1999 international beach volleyball season—only their third on the doubles circuit—they were ranked 26th. They finished the year at No. 2.

Maybe it's the genes. Rafer Johnson took gold in the decathlon at the 1960 Olympics. Davis' father is former N.Y. Knick ('61-63) Cleveland Buckner. Or maybe it's the competitive fires burning on the home front. Jenny's husband, Kevin Jordan, was a wide receiver for UCLA. Annett's hubby, Byron, is trying to make the U.S. swim team after missing the cut in '96 by three-tenths of a second.

But mostly it's the way the two women feed off each other. Davis and Johnson Jordan are devout Christians who would rather give it up to God than dish about themselves. The two first met on opposing sides of the net in high school, then helped lead UCLA to two NCAA indoor finals. (Davis also played on the '91 title team.) After

graduation they joined the now-defunct beach fours circuit before switching to doubles in '97. The transition wasn't easy—two to a side means a lot more ground to cover, and a player's weaknesses are more easily exploited—but Davis and Johnson Jordan finished second in only their third tournament on the Women's Professional Volleyball Association tour. "We definitely weren't expecting that our first year," Davis admits.

Their momentum was stalled when the WPVA folded in '98, and the pair had trouble qualifying for the much tougher international tournaments. But everything came together last year. While Davis and Johnson Jordan often credit their strong faith, opponents are more likely to note how evenly matched they are. Both can block, hit, set and dig with confidence. They even share the same understated demeanor—though they claim that's not always the case. "I'm more fiery," Johnson Jordan says. "Annett only gets fired up if I do something good."

If they can finish the season ranked first or second in the U.S. (they were No. 2 as of June 5), they'll be celebrating with a trip to Australia, where Rafer Johnson took silver in 1956. Dad doesn't know if he can handle the pressure this time around—especially with Jenny's younger brother, Josh, attempting to make the Olympics as a javelin thrower. "It is way, way, way more nerve-racking to watch your children compete," Johnson says. "But it would be a thrill beyond comparison with anything that's happened to me."

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