

Sports

Tennis team prepares for season with productive fall

By Patrick Alderman
Staff Writer

The men's and women's tennis teams are gearing up for a new season this spring. UNCA's men finished third in the Big South Conference last season, and hope to have an even better performance this year.

Head coach Dan Silverstein believes his teams have made great strides this fall in preparing for the 1999 season.

"If we work hard over the semester break and come into the spring season prepared, ready to believe in each others abilities, then we will have a legitimate shot at the BSC title," said Silverstein.

The men's team competed in four tournaments this fall, while the women's team competed in three tournaments, and a dual match against Western Carolina. Four starters from last season's third-ranked men's team will return in the spring. Brandon

Shupe, a senior and All-Conference selection from a year ago, will return to lead the Bulldogs in the number one position.

Sophomore Jimmy Langton will step in at the number two spot. Langton finished last season with 13 wins, and will be heavily counted on by the team for the upcoming spring season.

Scott Prybys, a sophomore, held the number five spot last season and, due to his training over the summer, is expected by the coaching staff to challenge for the number three spot.

Jakub Jez is the last of the starters returning from last year. A sophomore, Jez will be playing between the four and six positions.

Zack Molina, a freshman, is a recent addition to the Bulldogs and is expected to add a certain depth to the team.

The men's team welcomes two new players - Ivar Lalic and Jeff Grimm. Lalic, hailing from Yugoslavia, had a strong high school career out of Gainesville, Fla., and is expected to blossom at UNCA. Grimm, a high school teammate of Prybys, was a state qualifier all four years of his career in Michi-

gan. "The men's team has a real shot," Silverstein said. "With the five starters that we have from last season, we have a chance to make the NCAA tournament if we take the conference championship."

The women's team will have three starters returning from last season.

Laura Hastay, a sophomore who

Houbenreich, Allison Hunt, Nancy Livesay, Stephanie Shuba, G.G. Strawn, and Janelle Watson. The coaching staff is impressed with all these freshmen's fall results, and expects them to play important roles in the Big South title chase.

"It's going to be extremely hard this spring deciding who plays at what position," Silverstein said.

"We have nine girls who could play at any time and at any given position."

Silverstein's faith in his girls stems from the results of this fall's tournament.

Transfer Janelle Watson overcame the fourth seed from the University of Louisville during the East Region Rolex Championships the weekend of Nov. 6.

"Janelle played two years at a top-notch Division II school (Flagler), and has the talent to be one of the top players in the BSC and the East Region," Silverstein said.

Both Livesay and Strawn reached the semifinals of the tournament

before falling to some tough opponents from central Florida.

Houbenreich, Hastay, Shuba, Watson, and Livesay were all able to dominate their opponents from the Western Carolina team.

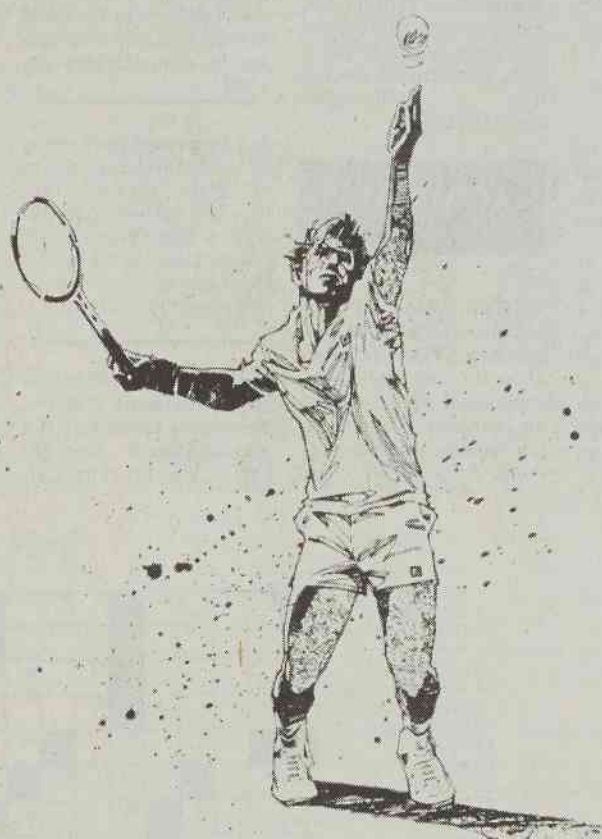
"Right now, we have six girls who are going to challenge each other for the number one spot," Silverstein said. "This team will only get better as the year goes on, and as they gain confidence, individually, and in their teammates."

The spring season will begin on Feb. 9 as both the men's and women's teams' face East Carolina.

The first home matches will be played on Feb. 18 in the first Big South Conference match against Charleston Southern University.

Other schedule highlights for the men include nationally-ranked teams such as North Carolina on Feb. 27, N.C. State on March 6, Jacksonville University on March 22, and Florida State on March 23.

The women's team will face College of Charleston at home on March 12, Jacksonville on March 22, and Bethune-Cookman on March 25.



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will play in the top four positions, was injured most of the 97-98 season, and is itching to show the entire conference why she was so highly recruited two years ago. According to the coaching staff, Hastay should be one of the top players for the Bulldogs this season.

"Laura worked extremely hard last summer, and is going to be looked upon as a leader for the spring season," Silverstein said.

Cathy Rhoney, a sophomore, played in the sixth position last year, and also held the team-best record with 13 wins her freshman year.

Jennifer Smith is a returning senior and will look to take the first spot in the lineup.

"These three young ladies are going to have to help the freshmen through this upcoming spring season for us to be successful," Silverstein said.

The Bulldogs signed six new freshmen to the women's tennis team last spring, resulting in what Silverstein believes to be the deepest team ever to play for UNCA.

Among those signed for the upcoming season are Kristen

Bulldogs 0-5 in regular season

By Chris Walker
Staff Writer

The UNCA women's basketball team lost to Auburn University on Dec. 1. The loss to the Tigers is the fourth in two weeks, and brings the Bulldogs' record to 0-5.

UNCA lost 74-42 while shooting 32 percent from the floor. The Bulldogs also lost to UNC-Wilmington 70-47. The Bulldogs only shot 27 percent from the floor against UNCW.

N.C. State scored 93 points, while keeping UNCA to only 25. This 68-point margin of victory is the biggest against UNCA this season. In their closest game of the season, the Bulldogs' lost to UNC-Greensboro 69-53.

UNCA has more tough games to come, including games at Western Carolina University, University of South Carolina, and Appalachian State University.

The Bulldogs shot 40 percent from the field in the first half against Auburn to trail by only three at the half.

Auburn kept UNCA to 24 percent from the floor and out-scored the Bulldogs 45-16 in the second half.

Auburn won 45 rebounds to UNCA's 20, and forced 19 turnovers. The Bulldogs made 16 of 50 field goals and forced 14 Auburn turnovers.

The Bulldogs had trouble scoring against UNCW in their 70-47 loss. UNCA shot 27 percent from the floor and made only one three

pointer out of 13 total attempts.

Senior Elisa Fellers led the Bulldogs with 10 points, while Nicole Sampson had six points and 13 rebounds. Freshman K'Shaki Short added nine points.

Sixteenth-ranked N.C. State held UNCA to 21 percent from the floor and forced 35 turnovers. The Wolfpack out-scored UNCA 50-14 in the first half.

"We don't come in here thinking we can beat N.C. State, but we want to make things work," said head coach Kathleen Weber. "We have to be able to execute on offense and defense to compete."

Junior Emily Hill led the Bulldogs with seven points, while junior Marion Kuehn and junior transfer Izrawit Medhanie also scored six. Medhanie had 10 of UNCA's 35 turnovers.

In the UNCG game, the Spartans led 33-18 at the half, but UNCA came back in the second half to trail by only four with under four minutes left.

UNCG then went on a 15-3 scoring run to end the game. UNCA shot only 20 percent from the floor in the first half, but was able to finish the night shooting 34 percent from the floor.

Fellers again led the Bulldogs with 17 points and 6 rebounds. Medhanie and Hill both scored 13 points. Hill also had seven assists and played the full 40 minutes of the game.

The Bulldogs have a 0-5 record, and have been beaten by an average of 41.2 points per game. The Bulldogs have scored a total of 193 points to their opponents' 399 points.

The Bulldogs were ranked fourth in the Big South Conference behind Liberty, Radford, and Charleston Southern prior to the beginning of the season, despite going to the Big South Conference Tournament championship game last season.

The Bulldogs' three returning seniors are Fellers, Candy Credito, and Kuehn.

UNCA's power may be in its junior class with Hill and transfer Medhanie. Hill is on pace to be only the fourth UNCA player to score 1,000 points since UNCA became a Division I school.

Hill led the Bulldogs last year, and was second in the Big South in scoring, averaging 18.1 points per game. Her 18.1 points per game was the highest scoring average by a UNCA player in 14 years. She was first team all-conference and the Big South tournament MVP last year. Hill is only the third player to be voted conference MVP while not on a winning team.

Medhanie, who is originally from Sweden, came to UNCA from Seminole Junior College in Florida. Medhanie's sister is a senior guard at Duke.

Medhanie has scored 42 points through five games for an average of 8.4 points per game.

Sampson is the only returning sophomore. Sampson leads the Bulldogs with 26 rebounds in four games for an average of 6.5 rebounds per game.

UNCA's freshman class is made up of Short, Casey Hunter, and Tynisha King. So far this season, these three freshmen have combined for 45 points.

Freshman basketball player helps Bulldogs on and off the court

By Kjrsten Keane
Staff Writer

A UNCA women's basketball player is learning what it takes to participate in Division I college athletics and be an active member of the UNCA community.

Casey Hunter, a 6-2 freshman from Raleigh, will be backing up senior Candy Credito this season as a center for the Bulldogs.

"It's been hard coming in as a freshman," said Hunter. "The difference between high school basketball and college is just a big step."

"We really like (Casey) because she has a lot of potential," said head coach Kathleen Weber. "Casey is physically very strong and she'll do a good job rebounding."

Hunter said she feels that, as a freshman, she has to work harder than a lot of other people on the team.

"We don't know a lot of the drills and the plays," said Hunter. "The intensity of the workouts, the running we do, it's just completely different from high school."

"With the addition of our new players, I think we'll be lot quicker and more athletic this year," said Weber. "This will enable us to play more full-court basketball and extend our running game."

Hunter said that the Bulldogs have a strong sense of unity this season, one which she hopes will continue to be demonstrated on the court.

"We've been through a lot together, especially the older kids," said Hunter. "We have senior mentors who work along with [freshmen] and they back you up the whole way."

Weber encouraged a strong community spirit in her team even before the season began, Hunter said.

"In preseason, (Weber) set aside one hour (per week) where we just sat down and talked," said Hunter. "It helped keep our spirits up in the

battles with the teams we play."

The team has been working together off court with community service projects this season.

"We did Walk For Life," said Hunter. "I've always enjoyed doing that kind of stuff."

Weber actively encouraged the team to participate in the community, Hunter said.

"She tells her team when they come into the program, 'if you don't want to put anything into the community, then you don't need to be here,'" said Hunter.

Hunter said she likes the tough schedule Weber has helped set for the season.

"I know that we've had a rocky start," said Hunter. "Clemson and NC State were pretty bad losses. But I'd rather work so that we can compete at the Big South Conference, and I think it's really going to help us."

It is a team goal to rise to the challenge of the Big South Championships this season, Hunter said. "I want us to be number one in the Big South this year," said Hunter. "We sat down and wrote our goals out and that was one of our biggest. The girls got into the championship game last year, and they're wanting to go back with a different ending."

Hunter said she considered Liberty, another Big South school, along with UNCA in the process of choosing a school.

"When I came here, it was very different. It was smaller," said Hunter. "I think that's really why I decided to come here."

"The Big South is really a great conference that's getting better and better every year," said Weber. "Liberty gave our league a lot of great exposure last season with their undefeated record, and they'll certainly be very good again this year."

Academically, Hunter said she is considering majoring in psychology at UNCA and then speech pathology in graduate school, concentrating on work with children.

"It gives you a really good feeling to know you have made a difference," said Hunter.

One community service project the Bulldogs are considering, Bulldog Buddies, is especially close to her field.

"Bulldog Buddies is where some of the athletes go to middle schools and elementary schools and sit down and help kid with any academic problems," said Hunter.

Many of UNCA's athletes have signed up to work with this program one or two hours per week.

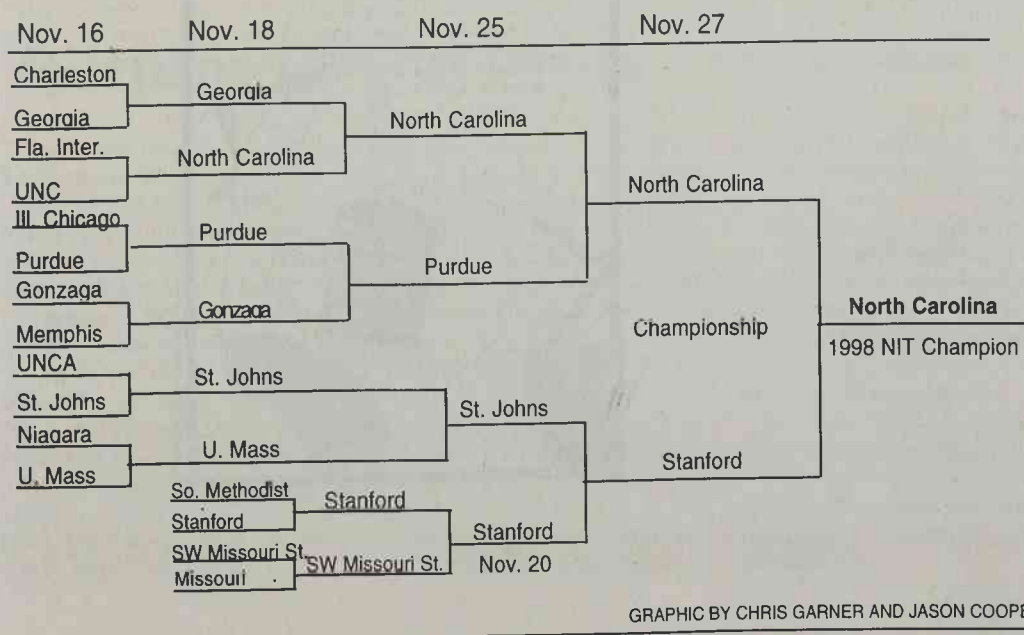
"It's really good to get the team out there," said Hunter. "(Bulldog Buddies) gets the team together and we get to do it with people who are really into it."

The Bulldogs face Western Carolina University Dec. 4 at the Ramsey Center in Cullowhee.

"I'm really looking forward to it," said Hunter. "I'm ready to win one."

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