

Tennis teams show promise as fall season heats up on the courts

COACH AND PLAYERS ALIKE LOOK FORWARD TO WHAT THIS YEAR'S TENNIS SEASON WILL SERVE THEM

BY ALAYNA BRADLEY
STAFF WRITER

The season is already underway for the Guilford College men's and women's tennis teams, and it is shaping up to be a good one.

According to head tennis coach Dave McCain, the season is split between seven weeks in the fall and 12 weeks in the spring. Some coaches choose to only have a spring season, but as McCain said, "Most good teams play in the fall."

"In the fall, we see what we have for first-years, see how they'll do, (and) we work out (the) doubles team for the rest of the season," said Allison Hewitt, a sophomore singles and doubles player. "Coach will move us around sometimes to see which doubles team works better."

And Guilford's team is looking great.

"I have a great group of players and people. This is probably the easiest team I've coached in a long, long time and this is probably the easiest team to get along with," said McCain in regards to both the men and the women. "They're good people and they're trying really hard; the effort level is terrific. I'm very happy with my team this year. I haven't always said that."

At the end of September, the men's team played at Emory University in Atlanta.

"We played the ITA tournament — which is the International Tennis Association Tournament — at Emory University. We competed in a singles bracket and a doubles bracket," said Turner Votipka, sophomore and award-winning tennis player.

"I was the only person to win our first round match, and we had three guys win their second round in the consolation bracket," said Votipka. "Another guy made it to the semi-finals in the consolation brackets, so it was good."

McCain said that the ITA is very tough. Six of the Quakers each competed against a player from Emory, whose team is the top men's team in the nation, but they still held their ground.

"I think our men's team is solid all the way through," said McCain. "We've actually got 12 guys that could interchange into the top six. I think we're probably going to be about like last year, maybe a little stronger."

Votipka is also hopeful about the men's team, even though lots of them are first-years.

"We have a really young team but it's all pretty level all the way down," said Votipka. "We've got some pretty good freshmen, so hopefully we can all hold our own (and) just keep improving. We should probably be as good, if not better, than last year."

Women's tennis also looks promising this year.

"I think we will do a lot better than last year," said Hewitt. "We are a lot stronger than we were last year. We added three first-years onto the team and they're good assets."

"They have two really good first-years and another first-year that plays doubles pretty well," said Votipka about the newcomers. "And we have a first-year that might be

playing in our number one spot, but now she's playing our two, which is good."

After this pre-season, the tennis team has a tough schedule for the 2012-13 year. The men's team is playing two Division I teams — Liberty University and The Citadel, The Military College of South Carolina — as well as a couple of Division II schools.

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Dave McCain, head tennis coach

"Our guys finished third in the Old Dominion Athletic Conference last year, and the women finished fifth," said McCain. "You kind of have to have schedules that reflect where they play. We want to have a good season and some of the matches we'll lose, but what you're really preparing for are the ODAC tournaments. ODAC might look a little easier after you play Liberty and The Citadel."

Controversy arises over NFL replacement referees

BLOWN CALLS AND FAN FRUSTRATION HIGHLIGHT PROBLEMS DURING THE EARLY-SEASON LOCKOUT

BY BRYAN DOOLEY
SENIOR WRITER

What kind of call is that? Do these refs know what they are doing? The National Football League recently found itself under scrutiny after it locked out experienced referees and hired less knowledgeable replacements.

Most of the scrutiny began after a controversial call on Sept. 24 during the Seattle Seahawks game against the Green Bay Packers. On the last play of the game, the Seahawks' desperation pass was ruled an interception by one official, and a touchdown by another. After a conference between the officials, Wayne Elliot, the head official, ruled a touchdown.

Many observers would disagree.

"I think they jeopardized the integrity of the game and gave people more reason to blame outside forces for losses instead of taking responsibility for it themselves," said first-year quarterback Mitchell Ferrick.

Ferrick explained that despite the bad call, the Packers still had the chance to win.

"There were plays that whole game that could have been made for Green Bay, that could have changed the game," added Ferrick.

Some fans still blame the referees for

being unqualified to call NFL games.

"I thought the replacement officials were just not up to par or qualified to be officiating NFL games," said senior Lamar Cassell, a sports management major. "That point was proven by the product the NFL was giving its fans with all the games that were officiated by replacement officials."

Others disagree, pointing out the difficult situation in which the replacement officials found themselves.

"Too many times we want to blame officials for calls that 'made us lose,'" said Steve Fleshman, head of officials for the Old Dominion Athletic Conference. "Everyone talked about the bad call made at the end of the Green Bay game. I never heard anyone mention the fact that Aaron Rogers (quarterback for the Packers) was sacked eight times in the first half."

Bob Malekoff, associate professor of sport studies, sympathizes with the replacements.

"Clearly they were put in a tough spot and, not surprisingly, did not measure up to the regular officials," said Malekoff. "One problem that replacement refs had was that coaches and players were trying to gain an advantage by intimidating them. They never really had a chance to gain the kind of control that the regular refs have."

When referees are in control, the players determine the quality of the game.

"A well officiated game will allow for a safe environment, as well as let the outcome be determined by the play of the game," said Chris Rusiewicz, head football coach.

Coaches and players agree that officials help to maintain the integrity of the game.



NFL referees signal a touchdown following a Seattle receiver's disputed catch against the Green Bay Packers on Monday Night Football on Sept. 24.

"I think the officials are there to hold players and coaches accountable," said Faris El-Ali, a junior and captain of the football team. "Good referees uphold the integrity of the game because more often than not, little gets past them."

However, even good referees make mistakes.

"I have officiated for over 20 years," said Fleshman. "Every official who has been doing this for any length of time has been involved with a bad call. Sometimes the outcome of a bad call affects the game. That is just part of the game."

"If we take the human element out of it, we no longer have a game."