

Men's and women's tennis struggle against top-ranked opponents

Sam Calvert
Sports Editor

WOMEN'S

It was a busy day Saturday as the Elon women's tennis team took on Winston-Salem State University in the morning at home before driving to Chapel Hill to play the No. 11 University of North Carolina. The team split matches, defeating Winston-Salem State 7-0 before losing to North Carolina by the same score.

When the team walked off the court that evening, it was for the last time until Feb. 18, when the Phoenix will travel to UNC Wilmington.

"We competed hard," head coach Elizabeth Anderson said. "It was a long day."

In its first match, Elon swept Winston-Salem 7-0, not giving up more than four games in any one match.

Later in the afternoon, the Phoenix met a different fate, falling 7-0 to North Carolina. While the team dropped each of its singles matches, its No. 1 doubles team of senior Anna Milian and sophomore Elisa Simonetti beat the No. 28-ranked duo, Jocelyn Ffriend and Haley Hemm 8-6.

"We really put up a fight," freshman Briana Berne said. "The score is not really indicative of that."

Now, the team is looking at a 12-day break between Saturday's matches and its next match in Wilmington.

Anderson said the Phoenix is going to use this time to work on specifics, such as the team's overall doubles play.

"I think that can be one of our biggest weapons," she said.

The team is also going to be preparing for the upcoming stretch of matches, including the next one against the UNCW Seahawks, Anderson said.

Elon will only be UNCW's second match since Jan. 23, when it beat Norfolk State University 6-1.

According to Anderson, the team expects to win the match.

"It's going to be a tough match, but they are definitely beatable," Anderson said. "And they are definitely a team we want to beat."

Berne said even though the non-conference matches do not count toward the conference tournament, there is still pressure to do well.

The team's match-play experience is valuable to its performance, she said.

"We can't get the same experience from practice that we can in match play," Berne said.

Anderson said these matches will also help because many of its non-conference opponents look similar to teams in the Southern Conference.

The four matches the team has before it takes on its first SoCon opponent will give the team a chance to fine-tune its play, Anderson said.

"We want to work on basic consistency so that we give ourselves a chance," Berne said. "If anything, we want to give anyone we play a fight."

MEN'S

In a match that came down to the doubles point, the Elon men's tennis team fell to its fourth nationally-ranked team of the spring season on Saturday.

The team lost 4-3 to UNC Wilmington but looks to rebound for its first win of the year at noon Saturday at home.

"This is the strongest non-conference schedule we've had yet," head coach Michael Leonard said. "It's forcing our team to grow up quick."

Although No. 1 junior Philip Nemeč, No. 2 junior Chase Helpingstine and No. 4 Alberto Rojas secured victories for the Phoenix in singles, the team dropped the initial doubles point with losses at all three lines.

"We have to fix doubles," Helpingstine said. "But in singles, everyone competed well."

Leonard said the team was working on its doubles trouble, mixing up the line-up and starting over.

He said he wanted to split up the best players to create three stronger doubles teams instead of just having one good team.

Playing against ranked teams in the non-conference is an advantage because every team in the conference will have at least one or two high-caliber players, Helpingstine said.

"We're going to need a full team effort if we want to pull out some wins," Helpingstine said.

The next match for the team will be a rematch from last year against North Florida, where Elon won 4-3 in Jacksonville, Fla.

"We played last year in a tough match," Helpingstine said. "We definitely want our first win of the season."

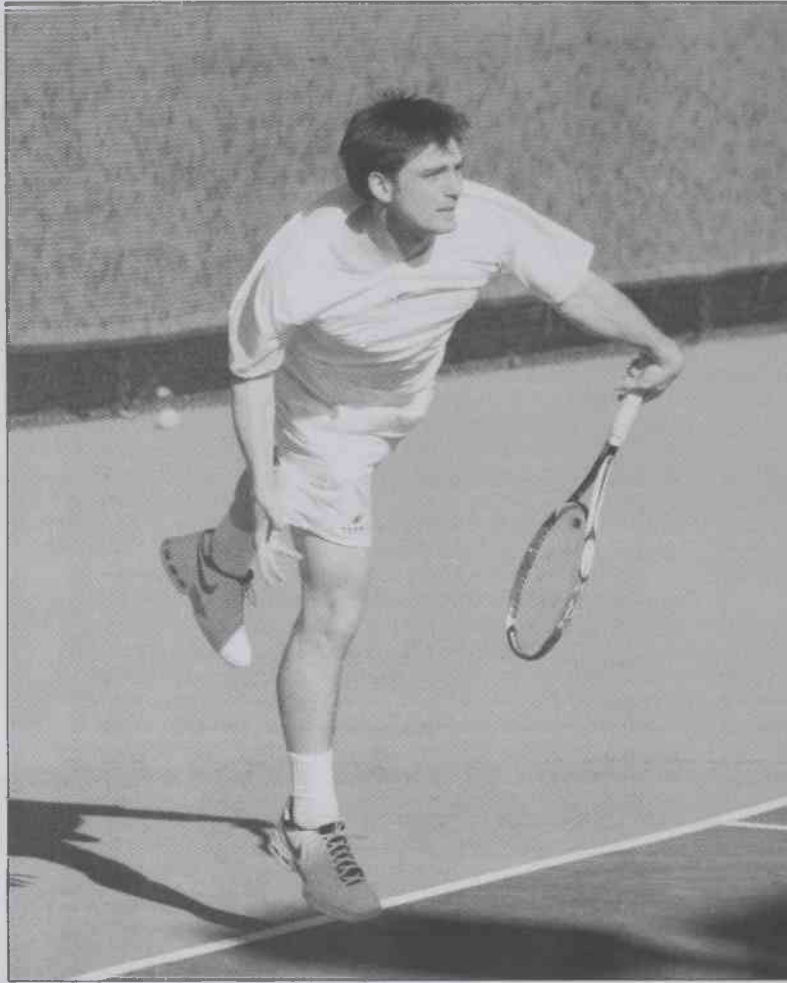
On Sunday, the team will travel to Columbia, S.C. to take on No. 45 University of North Carolina. According to Leonard, the strength of the non-conference schedule will help the team when it reaches Southern Conference play. The tough matches have given the young team a chance to gain experience, he said.

"Our players have really stepped up and embraced the challenge," Leonard said. "They don't look out of place out there."

The men will begin SoCon play on March 6, when Elon hosts Georgia Southern University.

Last season, Elon finished second in the conference behind Furman University, with a 9-1 conference record.

"Our whole goal is to do well in the conference," Leonard said. "If we play well, we can win any of these matches."



FILE PHOTO

Junior Philip Nemeč and doubles partner junior Chase Helpingstine lost their match Saturday 8-7 (8-6) against UNC Wilmington. Afterward in singles play, Nemeč came back to defeat UNCW's Michael Pereira 4-6, 6-3, 6-3 at line one.

High hopes for addition of ice hockey team

Sam Calvert and Tori Veight
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The chill of the air. The slap of sticks. The swoosh of skates. The atmosphere of the Greensboro Ice House is electric as a men's league ice hockey team whirls across the ice.

One of the men on the team is Elon sophomore T.J. O'Malley. While Elon does not currently have its own team, O'Malley said he wants to see ice hockey added to the list of club sports offered by the university.

"Ever since I first set foot on campus it has been my dream to be able to make a difference here and help in the process of making Elon one of the most desirable and complete schools in the country," O'Malley said. "I strongly believe that bringing an Ice Hockey program to Elon is my opportunity to do so."

The university does offer the similar sport of roller hockey, and according to O'Malley, many of the men who play on the roller hockey team were originally ice hockey players.

He said many of the participants had to adjust to the new sport because there was not an ice hockey option offered at Elon.

Kevin Barr, a freshman on the roller hockey team, is one of those participants.

Barr said he believes while roller hockey is fun, it is also very different and does not quite satisfy the ice hockey players' need to play.

He, along with O'Malley and many others, instead participate in a men's ice hockey team at the Greensboro Ice House.

Some have expressed concerns about adding the sport.

One is that adding a club ice hockey team would in turn cause the roller hockey team to discontinue.

Although O'Malley wants to add an ice hockey team, he said it is not his goal to have roller hockey eliminated from the list of sports available.

Instead, he said he wishes to add ice hockey to the list without erasing any of the existing club sports.

Another concern is ice hockey would cost too much.

O'Malley said he wants to address this issue in practical ways.

"I know there may be some concerns with cost," O'Malley said. "I have ideas to raise money and decrease the costs of playing, such as fundraisers, raffles, events, donations, etc. so that money would not be an issue."

He even held a raffle while at home that raised nearly \$1,000 to go toward team fees.

O'Malley said he believes by offering



PHOTO SUBMITTED

A few Elon students form a team and compete in a men's ice hockey league at the Greensboro Ice House because the university currently does not have an organized ice hockey team.

ice hockey as a club sport, Elon would be expanding its prospective student base.

Even though Elon is in the South, many of the students, 34 percent according to the Elon University Web Site, are from the North, where hockey is more popular.

"Ice hockey is a great sport that is in high demand here at our school, and all of our students, families, friends, faculty and staff deserve to have the chance to participate in, become involved with, and overall enjoy ice hockey," O'Malley said.