

Seasoned Silverman continues to

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Senior Reporter

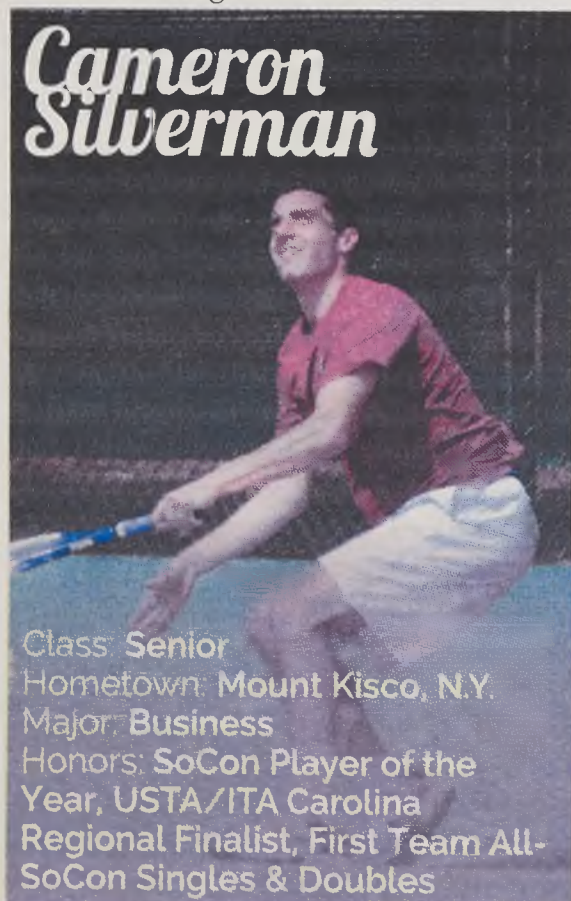
The Australian Open may be taking place on the other side of the globe, but fortunately there is still high quality tennis being played here in the states – at the Jimmy Powell Tennis Center.

Senior men's tennis star Cameron Silverman has put Elon University tennis on the map for the last four years. Fresh off his win in the Men's National Open Indoor Championship, Silverman is sitting pretty ranked No. 25 in the latest Intercollegiate Tennis Association rankings.

"It's my last year of college tennis, so it'll be something I never get to do again," Silverman said. "I'm going out there with a different mindset than in the past. I'm just trying to win as many matches as I can and enjoy every moment."

The reigning Southern Conference player of the year, whose ITA ranking is the highest it's ever been while playing for the maroon and gold, is ready to embrace his ranking.

"There are certain pressures that come with the ranking... but I have to make sure



Cameron Silverman

Class: Senior
Hometown: Mount Kisco, N.Y.
Major: Business
Honors: SoCon Player of the Year, USTA/ITA Carolina Regional Finalist, First Team All-SoCon Singles & Doubles

GRAPHIC BY TERENCE MCLAUGHLIN | Design Editor

I'm [still] playing for my team," Silverman said.

Coach Michael Leonard was quick to point out that being ranked is nothing new for Silverman. Silverman bounced around the ITA rankings in 2013, but at times it appeared that he struggled with the proverbial target on his chest.

"Last year he had a good fall so he was ranked high, turning him into the hunted, rather than the hunter, which was a new place for him," Leonard said. "Every time he went out, he got someone's best shot because he would be a great win for somebody."

But Silverman, along with Leonard, said he believes that he is better prepared to deal with the pressures of being ranked in 2014.

"[Silverman] is the most mature he's ever been," Leonard said. "When he came in as a freshman he wasn't mature at all, so to see where he was and where he is now, he's in a good place. We're going to see what he's capable of. He's stronger, his game's better and he's mentally stronger, so it'll be exciting to see."

Perhaps Silverman's biggest aid in his quest to keep his ranking is his teammates. Silverman said he realizes that tennis is a team game and believes the team has what it takes to overcome their heartbreaking defeat in last year's Southern Conference Championship match against Samford University.

"As hard as last year was, you just have to take the positives out of it," Silverman said. "[I have to] not take anything for granted and not get ahead of myself. I think this year we have a really good shot if we all play well."

Aside from the motivation from last year, the Phoenix also has the benefit of not losing any key players to graduation.

"We lost a heartbreaker last year, and I think that motivates us going into this year, especially with the right kind of kids," Leonard added. "I think everyone came back a little more mature, a little tougher and a little fitter," Silverman said.

Even with the likes of Silverman leading a team full of much improved returning players, the Phoenix hasn't had an easy



CAROLINE OLNEY | Photo

Stefan Fortmann, a First Team All-SoCon honoree in 2013, will be a vital piece to Elon's success.

start to the 2014 campaign. After a difficult weekend in Raleigh to open up the season against North Carolina State University and College of William & Mary, the team traveled to take on the then No. 7 Duke University Blue Devils. Silverman and the Phoenix left Durham victorious as Silverman defeated No. 52 Jason Tahir, 6-5, 3-6, 6-1.

The tough stretch continues as the Phoenix hits the road once more to face the University of Virginia Cavaliers as part of the ITA Kick-Off Weekend Jan. 25-26.

"We're trying to go to matches [against top competition] with the mentality of every match being a physical match," Leonard continued. "Trying to stay in there and play as well as you can because sometimes against some of these teams you get over-

whelmed and someone can get on top of you kind of quick. What we're trying to do is have everybody prepared to have physical and mental capability of making each match as long as possible so it prepares you for when you have to go in the conference."

The matchup against top-ranked Virginia excites Silverman the most. Cavaliers had two players ranked in preseason ITA singles rankings, including senior Alex Domijan and junior Mito Frank, who were ranked No. 2 and No. 3 respectively.

"I'll get a shot at them, which is great," Silverman said.

Leonard is especially excited in anticipation for Silverman's matchup with some of college tennis' best. Leonard said Silverman