

Women's tennis team ready to reach new heights

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Coming off a 21-win spring season in 2013, the most successful campaign in program history, the Elon University women's tennis team is gearing up for the beginning of a new spring season in which the team will return many of its top producing players from a year ago.

The Phoenix roster includes four seniors, most notably Jordan Johnston and Frida Jansaker. The two have been a dynamic doubles pair for Elon in the past, going 22-2 on the 2013 season, including 9-1 in the Southern Conference. When asked to describe what makes them such a dominant duo, Johnston said it goes beyond words.

"We have gotten into a really good system of playing doubles together and we have so much experience now, this being our third season playing together," she said. "We really have a great understanding of each other. It doesn't even require words anymore. We just know what it takes to win and we know how to get the best out of each other and I think that's the reason why we are so successful – because we know what to do to help each



GRAPHIC BY TERENCE MCLAUGHLIN | Design Editor



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Elon senior Frida Jansaker ended 2013 with 11 consecutive singles wins and 10 straight doubles wins.

other out and pick each other up."

Johnston and Jansaker, the No. 1 doubles pairing as well as No. 1 and No. 2 singles players, respectively, anchor a Phoenix lineup that returns seven of its eight players from 2013.

"Senior leadership is fantastic," Elon coach Elizabeth Anderson said. "All four of them are really motivated to finish this year as their best year and they've really done a nice job."

Johnston's individual accolades speak for themselves. She has been named to the All-SoCon first team for three consecutive years and was also awarded SoCon Freshman Player of the Year in 2011. The Intercollegiate Tennis Association (ITA) ranked Johnston No. 69 in the nation among singles players for the upcoming season. Despite the many individual awards Johnston has received, she remains more concerned about the success of the team as a whole, ranked No. 70 in the nation by the ITA.

"[My] main goal, only goal: conference championship, make the NCAA Tournament," Johnston said. "That's what my goal personally is, and for the team I want that more than anything."

On paper, this goal is a lot easier for the Phoenix with the departure of the College of Charleston from the SoCon. The Cougars are now members of the Colonial Athletic Association (CAA), the same conference that Elon will be joining next year. College of Charleston has dominated the women's tennis landscape in the SoCon in recent years, winning five

straight SoCon Tournaments since 2009.

The road to the NCAA Tournament began for the Phoenix on Jan. 18 in Blacksburg, Va., with a match against the Virginia Tech Hokies. Virginia Tech, ranked No. 54 in the nation, defeated Elon 6-1. The Phoenix will play another Atlantic Coast Conference team on Jan. 22, a match in Chapel Hill against the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Elon is 1-19 against ACC schools in program history, picking up their lone victory last season against Wake Forest University. Despite Elon's struggles against ACC competition, Coach Anderson says the team will not back down.

"We're going after them," Anderson said. "We've got some good opportunities, and I think we have a good team. We can



FILE PHOTO BY AL DRAGO

Jordan Johnston went undefeated at the Kitty Harrison Invitational in Chapel Hill, N.C., this past fall.

beat these teams. We just have to go out there with the right mindset and prepare the right way in practices."

With College of Charleston off to the CAA and Elon close behind next year, players and coaches alike believe this is the year, and the window of opportunity is open to win the SoCon in 2014.

Alongside the dominant doubles pairing of Johnston and Jansaker, senior Bryn Khoury, who won 22 singles matches in 26 tries in 2013, is back, as is senior Viviana Stavreva (12 singles wins). The foundation and depth are there for the Phoenix, guided by the consistency of Johnston and Jansaker. The Phoenix has made it no secret that their goals are to win the SoCon Tournament and advance to the NCAA Tournament for the first time since joining the SoCon. This journey began on Jan. 18 and will continue into April.

"The four of us [seniors] have been through it all – good, bad and ugly – and it's coming to a head with this being our last season," Johnston said. "It's sad when you think about the fact that it's our last [season] but we are really excited because this is the year we are going to bring it. The happiest we will be is when we win that conference championship this year. The four of us have stayed together through it all and have seen this team do a lot of things and that would just be the cherry on top."