

Aztec Tennis Reporter

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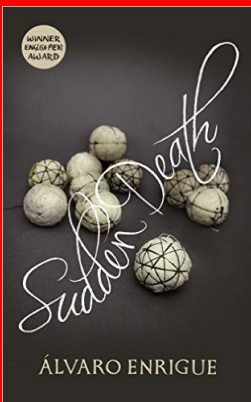
SERVING THE SAN DIEGO STATE TENNIS COMMUNITY SINCE 1998

January 2017

BOOKS

Aztec History In Tennis Novel

Alvaro Enrique's *Sudden Death* is a novel that gorges on tennis played in an ancient, violent manner. The major match, fought in Rome, pits the Italian painter Caravaggio against the Spanish poet Francisco de Quevedo. A *Los Angeles Times* reviewer said "*Sudden Death* shows us that games are never merely games, because no game is played without consequences — some of which then permanently cloud our ability to look back and understand the procession of bodies that enable our play, our culture."



SPHERES: To die on court?

That "procession of bodies" involves the Aztec empire's destruction by Hernán Cortés, the Spanish conquistador. As a result, Author Enrique, a Mexican, has found a provocative

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Aztecs Entering 95th Tennis Season

San Diego State's two tennis teams embark this month on their 95th year of collegiate competition dating back to a campus men's tennis club founded in 1922.

Stocked with at least nine first-year players starting their college tennis careers, the two Aztec teams face a challenging season..

"We have four new players on a nine-person team., all very, very good, bringing a lot of new energy and a lot of skill," said Aztec Women's Head Coach Peter Mattera. Aztec Men's Head Coach Gene Carswell said injuries changed



COMPETITOR: Aztec Jana Buth of Germany helps lead 2017 women's team.

his team's dynamic in 2016. "I think the expectation this year is that we know we missed out a little bit on an

opportunity last year and we want to get a conference championship under our belt," Carswell said.

He listed Marko Goles-Babic of Croatia, Milen Ianakiev of Bulgaria and Germany and Sander Gjoels-Anderson of Denmark as among top players on his 11-man squad. Two newcomers scheduled to join the team in January are Inaki Espindola of Mexico and Rafael Alamazon of Spain.

Their teammates are Santiago Cevallos of Mexico, Daniel and Raul de la Torres

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In the Aviator Cockpit

Aztec Jim Ault (1985,1988) can never be accused of being a 'yes man.' He said no twice before saying yes to becoming general manager of the San Diego Aviators.



Ault

Now, two years later, his Aviators are the champions of World Team Tennis and Ault is looking for ways to grow WTT's popularity nationwide (and increase the San Diego crowds to at least 1,300 paying fans a night during next summer's 2017 season).

Ault was hired by Aviators' owners Fred Luddy, a software business executive, and Jack McGrory, a for-

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A Tennis Club in Peril

When San Diego authorities began searching for ways to enhance the environment along the shoreline of Mission Bay, the eight-court Pacific Beach Tennis Club found itself in the crosshairs of developers.



Adamson

Aztec Steve Adamson (1995-1998) is its head teaching pro and operator of its successful junior tennis academy.

Despite the club's 50-plus-year history of operating the facility for the county on public land, rumors spread that PBTC would be eliminated or moved nearby, where it

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Aztec Jim Ault at Controls as *Aviators* Take World Team Tennis Championship

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mer San Diego City Manager. Both men had taken tennis lessons from Ault, for decades one of the city's most respected teaching pros.

Ault was a member of the 1988 Aztec men's team that earned a Top 35 ranking under Coach Skip Redondo. He played beside Julio Noriega, Leland Rolling, Woody Yocum, Nick Goetz, and Alex Olmedo Jr., son of the Wimbledon champ.

Ault's grandfather Dick Ault played Aztec tennis in 1935 and 1936. Grandson Ault helped raise funds recently for Aztec assistant tennis coaches salaries.



CHAMPIONS: Aztec Jim Ault, right, after his *Aviators* captured the 2016 World Team Tennis Championship.

His goal as Aviator GM? Grow tennis as a professional spectator sport with streamlined scoring, and rules, relaxed fan behavior, and top 10 players performing at their peaks,

Ault said he wants fans to recognize that WTT rosters are filled with some of the world's top players.

Last summer, one Aviator, Ryan Harrison, 24, upset fifth-seed and Wimbledon runner-up Milos Raonic, 6-7, 7-5, 7-5, 6-1, to reach the third round at the United States Open.

Ault said Harrison's victory, which came days after the Aviators won the 2016 WTT title, showed his top 10 talent.

How a Small Tennis Club with Aztec Roots Faces Down Peril

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would be operated by a commercial vendor .

That's when members sprang into action. They formed a committee, began attending public meetings, and formulated proposals to expand the club's recreational value to the community.

"We had a big contingent of people that would go there and write notes to the committee there during he planning," Adamson said.

The effort has begun to pay off. The club appears in all three proposals currently being studied by planners.

"We've got a pretty vocal group and a great bunch of members," he said. "So I don't think we're going to be going anywhere, hopefully." Nevertheless, Ad-



Blankenship

amson predicted two years of added turmoil, including a possible lawsuit.

The club has a long Aztec heritage. Its first teaching pro was Aztec Powell Blankenship in 1962. He taught 43 years and was still on the courts two weeks before his death.

Squeezed between a municipal golf course, a campground for recreational vehicles, and three Little League baseball diamonds, the club reinvented itself a few years ago, transforming its scruffy, hard-scrabble appearance into a neatly gardened oasis boasting eight blue U.S. Open-style competition courts.

Adamson's Academy is doing well, too. His top three juniors have recently signed letters of intent to play at Stanford, Princeton, and UC Davis. "I have people on the wait list," he said. "It's a good problem to have."

Blending Aztec History and Fantasy, Novelist Invents Tennis as Sport for Dueling

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way to use tennis to remind us of the tragedy that befell the Aztec people when confronted and defeated by their Spanish invaders."

An Amazon reviewer said "the changing fortunes of the game -- think blood sports rather than Wimbledon -- thread through the entire book, but only as a spine to which numerous other ideas may be attached."

The ball," said reviewer Roger Brunyate, is "stuffed with the hair of Anne Boleyn, cut off before her death and given as fee to her French executioner."

"The story of how it got into Caravaggio's hands," Brunyate wrote, involves Popes, a Geno-



Author



Painter

ese banker, and a Milanese saint -- and along the way the history of the Council of Trent and the Counter-Reformation that ended the Renaissance, launched the Baroque, and gave the Inquisition its license to torture and kill."

How did the author choose tennis as a "spine" for his story? Confessing he made up the rules as he wrote the novel, Enrigues explained to *The New York Times*: "My children play tennis. So I have seen 9-year-old games of

tennis. But no, I am an aficionado of 16th- and 17th-century tennis, which is what the characters are playing — *pallacorda* (or 'real tennis')."

Who would have guessed an Aztec role in fantasized tennis history?

— John Martin (1957)

Aztec Tennis Reporter January, 2017

Aztec Tennis Reporter is a newsletter created in 1998 for players, coaches, alumni, and friends of San Diego State tennis. Neither the university nor its athletic department is responsible for its content. This is the 63rd issue. To comment, or subscribe, email aztectennisreporter@yahoo.com.



John Martin
Editor

Where Are We Now? The Great Search (1922-2017)

ON-CALL COACH: Aztec Christian Groh (2004-07), far right, has worked for Tommy Haas and Taylor Fritz in key roles when called for his help.

Twelve months ago at the Australian Open, Fritz, the world's top junior in 2015 and now a top ATP touring pro, described Groh's duties to *Aztec Tennis Reporter*.

"When I'm home in San Diego, I'm always working with Christian. I used to train at Carson, but anytime I get the chance, Christian is involved."

ATR: What does he bring to the relationship?

FRTZ: "Discipline. He makes me very disciplined, makes me work hard and I need someone like that to get me to do all the right things and just act professional, because he's been



Taylor Fritz



Christian Groh

there with Tommy Haas and he knows what it takes."

Groh began coaching as an assistant at the University of San Diego following his Aztec playing days, where he won 45 career matches, ninth among San Diego State men's players. He coached Michael Berrer and Bradley Klahn.

In 2012, Haas, once world No. 2 and beginning a comeback from injuries, asked for help from Groh, a countryman. Groh hails from Crailsheim and lives in San Diego. Haas, born in Hamburg, lives in Los Angeles. Groh holds an MBA, was an academic all-conference player as an Aztec in 2005, 2006, and 2007. On April 12, 2006, he was the conference Player of the Week.

Aztec Tennis Squad Grades Lead All SDSU Sports Teams

When San Diego State's athletes met last April for the annual academic awards banquet, the Aztec Women's Tennis Team scored the highest grade point average in the entire Athletic Department.

Their 3.38 average was tops among all 18 Aztec men's and women's teams competing in NCAA sports, according to Head Coach Peter Mattera.

Aztec Dora Somoracz earned a straight-A average of 4.0.

The Aztec Men's Tennis Team topped all other men's teams and was second to the Aztec women with a 3.1 GPA, reported Head Coach Gene Carswell.

The event honored the top scholars among 550 athletes attending SDSU in

the spring and fall semesters of 2015.

Aztec men and women tennis players frequently lead scholars from all teams, often earning high grades that boost the SDSU Athletic Department standing nationwide.



TOP SCHOLARS: Flanked by former assistant coach Lindsey Gamp, left, and head coach Peter Mattera, right, eight Aztec women tennis players were honored for academic achievement. From left Olivia Larsson, Kristin Buth, Jana Buth, Isabelle Hoorn, Dora Somoracz (straight A's), Hailey Johnson, Tami Nguyen, and Paola Diaz.

2017 Aztecs : The Players and Their Opponents, Home and Away



Acero



Buth



Colvee



Davis



Diaz



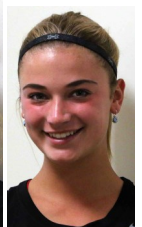
Larsson



Lederman



Smith



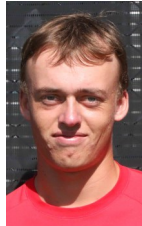
Valk



Anderson



Cevallos



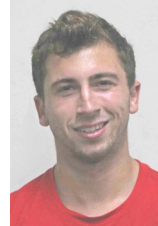
Gjoles-Babic



Hough



Ianakiev



Mitchell



Popov



Dan Torres



Raul Torres

Newcomers and Veterans, Aztecs Embark on a 95th Season

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of Calexico, CA, David Hough of Australia, Nick Mitchell of Ojai, CA, and Joel Popov of Finland.

“My goal for these guys is to be the best team that they can be,” Carswell said.

Among women players competing for top positions, Mattera listed Jana Buth of Germany, and newcomers Mia Smith of England, and Alli Valk of Canada.

Their teammates are Berta Acero and Marina Colvee, both of Spain; Kennedy Davis of San Jose, CA, Paola Diaz de Regules of Mexico, Olivia Larsson of Sweden, and Taylor Le-

derman of Sarasota, FL,

Mattera said his newest players faced “a little bit of a learning curve here in the fall.” He called the individual (non-team) matches a good way to get ready for the spring season.

“I think they’re going to be much better prepared,” he said.

The women open their season January 21 at home with a double-header against UC Riverside and UC San Diego.



Mattera



Carswell

The men open on the road Jan 14 against Hawai’i, and at home on January 22 against Mississippi State.

The eight men’s opponents who will compete at the Aztec Tennis Center this year are Mississippi State (Jan 22), Pepperdine (March 2), Stanford ((March 29), Boise State (April 2), Fresno State (April 7), and UNLV (April 9).

Among 16 top women’s opponents at the Aztec Tennis Center are Long Beach State (Feb 17), Arizona State (Feb 25) and a cluster of Ivy League teams who

venture west during their spring week breaks: Brown (March 5), Yale (March 13), Dartmouth (March 19), and Princeton (March 24).

Match times at gpaztecs.com

Aztec Men Home

- Jan 22 Mississippi State
- Feb 17 UC Irvine
- Feb 12 UC Davis
- Feb 24 St. Mary’s
- Mar 2 Pepperdine
- Mar 29 Stanford
- Apr 2 Boise State
- Apr 7 Fresno State
- Apr 9 UNLV

Aztec Men Away

- Jan 14 Hawai’i
- Jan 15 UCSB
- Mar 10 Memphis
- Mar 11 Oklahoma State
- Mar 25 Utah State
- April 14 Air Force
- Apr 16 New Mexico
- Apr 28-30 Mountain West Championship Boise

Aztec Women Away

- Jan 29 UC Irvine
- Feb 1 USC
- Feb 11 Washington
- Feb 12 St Mary’s
- Apr 9 Nevada Reno
- Apr 22 San Jose State
- Apr 27-30 Mountain West Championship Las Vegas

Aztec Women Home

- Jan 21 UC Riverside
- Jan 21 UC San Diego
- Jan 28 Cal State Fullerton
- Feb 4 Cal Poly
- Feb 5 California
- Feb 17 Long Beach State
- Feb 22 Eastern Michigan
- Feb 25 Arizona State
- Mar 1 USD USD
- Mar 4 Hawai’i
- Mar 5 Brown
- Mar 10 Sacramento State
- Mar 13 Yale
- Mar 19 Dartmouth
- Mar 24 Princeton
- Mar 31 UNLV
- Apr 13 Fresno State