

Aztec Tennis Reporter

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SERVING THE SAN DIEGO STATE TENNIS COMMUNITY

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Aztecs Complete 99th Season Looking Ahead

Looking Back: How Sweet It Was

BY JOHN MARTIN

It's always a good idea to remember success. Aztec teams have won their share in the century since a campus tennis club formed in 1922.

In 2000, SDSU's men's team won the NCAA Regional Championship and reached the NCAA Sweet Sixteen in Athens, GA.

The tennis Gods smiled as the Aztecs scored two NCAA Regional upsets, defeating Washington, 4-3, and Pepperdine, 4-2.

On the Internet, the Aztec Athletic Department explained: "The Aztecs' 17 wins are the most ever by a John Nelson-coached SDSU squad, the most at the school since the men went 18-4 in 1993.

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SENIOR PRAISED: Aaro Pollanen of Finland drew appreciation from his coach for playing despite adversity.

Aztec Men 'Jelled as a Team'

For Aztec men's head coach Gene Carswell, navigating the 2021 season required completing a crucial task: helping his players get better together.

"Through all of this," Carswell said, "our Aztecs continued to make improvements in both singles and doubles in the spring and really jelled as a team. I think this culminated in our final Mountain West Conference match, where we defeated UNLV, 4-3. At the

time, UNLV was tied for a share of the regular season championship.

"It would have been fun to play a conference championship tournament to see how far our group's growth continued."

The prospects for 2022?

"We always set our sights high and I believe our prospects are good for next year," Carswell said. "We have a

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Transfer Expected To Boost Women In the 100th Year

In a season dominated by uncertainty, two determined Aztec head coaches successfully led San Diego State's two tennis teams through 34 matches against opponents from 9 states.

Given the circumstances, the results (see page 2) were a mixed success. Five players earned All Mountain West Conference honors.

"I think that the major message to learn from this year, both in tennis and in life, is gratitude!" said Aztec women's head coach Peter Mattera.

"Our athletic department did a really wonderful job in making SDSU be able to have seasons in all sports. It really took a village to make it happen, and for that we are all very grateful."

Mattera praised his players for adapting their lives.

"They stayed positive in spite of all the testing, mask wearing and new rules that were in place

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Looking Ahead: An All American Transfers To The Aztecs

A talented Oklahoma State student's decision to move to California for two final years of college tennis has brightened prospects for Aztec women's tennis.

Encouraged by praise of SDSU and its tennis program by a former OSU teammate, Tamara Arnold, Bunyawit Thamchaiwat of Thailand is joining the Aztecs.

The transfer was arranged by head coach Peter Mattera and his associate head coach, Nico Vinel.

She is OSU's 16th All American woman's tennis competitor.

In the year-end NCAA tournament, she defeated



OSU Photo via screen capture

TRANSFERING FROM OKLAHOMA STATE: Bunyawit Thamchaiwat of Thailand was named an All American in singles in May after reaching the 2021 NCAA Sweet Sixteen.

Wake Forest's Anna Campana in straight sets, 7-5, 6-2, to earn her second victory.

In the round of 16, Thamchaiwat, ranked 26th in the nation, lost to North Carolina State's Anna Rogers, ranked 6th, in three sets, 5-7, 6-4, 6-1.

This season, Thamchaiwat was the highest-ranking singles player in the Big 12 Conference and Big 12 Player of the Year. She won 12 of her 14 matches.

At Oklahoma State, Thamchaiwat, 23, majored in sports and coaching science.

She is from Nakhon Ratchasima, a city of 125,000 people living some 160 miles northeast of Bangkok.

What It Was Like: How Players Struggled, What They See Ahead

Nnena Nadozie, the top Aztec women's player, saw her usual training routines vanish:

"The biggest challenge was building up consistency as a team and as an individual."

"Having to take two weeks off (for Covid restrictions) really made it difficult for everyone."

"We're used to hitting every day, getting fitness every day."

Still, Nadozie saw brighter days ahead.

"I'm excited. The team is excited. Everyone's working hard...to get back into great tennis shape...It's going to be a really good year."

Johannes Seeman, the top Aztec men's player, said "This year was up and down...but

in the end we have to be thankful for everyone who made it possible for us to play this season. I had great memories. I'm glad I was able to practice and play. My goal next season is to raise my tennis level. As a team I hope to play in the NCAA final tournament.

"I am confident that we will have a great team next year," Seeman said, adding he hopes spectators will be able to attend matches, making the atmosphere "more special."

"I am stoked to see what the future will bring us," he said.

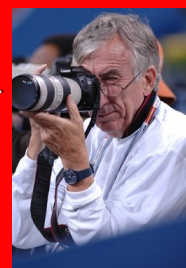
2021 AZTEC WOMEN (5-9)

AZTECS 7 UC Riverside 0
AZTECS 6 UC Irvine 1
USD 7 AZTECS 0
Oregon 7 AZTECS 0
Fresno St 4 AZTECS 1
AZTECS 4 Nevada 2
Utah St 4 AZTECS 3
Boise St 4 AZTECS 1
AZTECS 4 New Mexico 0
AZTECS 4 Air Force 0
Colorado St 4 AZTECS 3
Wyoming 4 AZTECS 0
San Jose St 4 AZTECS 1
UNLV 4 AZTECS 3

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Aztec Tennis Reporter invites letters to the editor. To comment, suggest stories or subscribe, email jjm2144@gmail.com.



Editor
John Martin

2021 AZTEC MEN (5-15)

Cal Poly 5, AZTECS 2
USC 7, AZTECS 0
AZTECS 4 UC San Diego 2
AZTECS 5 UC San Diego 0
UC Irvine 4 AZTECS 0
UC Davis 4 AZTECS 2
Boise State 4 AZTECS 0
Loyola 5 AZTECS 2
AZTECS 4 Loyola 3
Washington 4 AZTECS 3
Utah 5 AZTECS 2
Utah State 4 AZTECS 1
Air Force 4 AZTECS 1
New Mexico 4 AZTECS 0
Fresno State 4 AZTECS 1
AZTECS 4 Nevada 0
Santa Clara 4 AZTECS 2
AZTECS 4 UNLV 3
UCSB 5 AZTECS 2
USD 4 AZTECS 2

Looking Back Proudly: How Sweet It Was In 2000

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“No team, at least in the West, was hotter over the final six weeks of the year than the Aztecs.”

The press release continued: “San Diego State headed to Athens with wins in 11 of its last 12 contests and won 14-of-16 dating to early March.

“The Aztecs won eight in a row to close out the regular season and were in the midst of a nine-match winning streak before being upset by New Mexico in the Mountain West Conference Tournament final in Albuquerque, Seven of SDSU's 17 wins that year were shutouts.

“The Aztecs had been No. 37 in the preseason rankings, but were without the services of their top three players to open the season. At season's end, they ranked 19th.”

Alex Waske of Germany led the Aztec men in 2000. He was Mountain West Player of the Year and won All-American

honors.

Waske played on the ATP tour, reached the doubles semifinals of the French and Australian Opens, played German Davis Cup, and now op-

erates the Waske Tennis University in Frankfurt.

Among his teammates were Oliver Maiberger, Adam Webster, Valentino Pest, and

Matt Bere. The assistant coach was Gene Carswell, now in his 18th year as head coach.

At ATR's request, the 2000 Aztec head coach, John Nelson reflected on his experience that year.

“Our whole operating budget for equipment and travel was \$12,500!” Nelson said. “We only had four in-state scholarships. I am proud of the team's accomplishments. Most teams had 10 times the operating budget and four full out of state scholarships!

“Our team bought into the discipline and went for it,” Nelson said..

“To lose in the last match in the 3rd set to the team that went all the way to the (NCAA) finals was a great run.”

In the Round of 16, the Aztecs fell 4-3 to VCU, which then defeated Illinois (ranked 6th) and Tennessee (ranked 10th) by identical 4-3 scores before losing to top-seeded Stanford, 4-2.



Aztec Tennis Reporter,
front page, Vol 2, No. 3, 2000

Looking Back Proudly: How 2011 Upset Victory ‘Saved the Aztec Soul’

Battered by 14 losses in 18 matches, the Aztec men met USD in April (2011) as overwhelming underdogs.

The Toreros were ranked 29th in the nation. The Aztecs had dropped off the list of 75 top teams.

When the city rivals met informally in January, USD players won every match.

Days before their April encounter, Aztec Tim Schultz, due to play third singles, re-

turned to Berlin to be with his dying mother.

“Playing for Tim” and despite

Aztec Tennis Reporter, October 2011

all expectations, SDSU defeated USD, 4-3.

Aztecs Giovanni Vaglietti and Hunter Nicholas beat USD's 15th ranked doubles team, 8-5.

Aztecs Javier Pulgar and Juan Guillermo Flores won their match. The Aztecs led, 1-0.

The Toreros won three sin-

gles points but Aztecs Pulgar and Jose Sierra Short won three-set singles victories to deadlock the match at 3-3.

Finally, Aztec Andre Feliz rallied to win, 0-6, 7-6 (6), 6-2, after trailing, 0-6, 0-3, 0-40.

“It was an incredible match. I sort of came back from the dead,” Feliz said, “but that's what happens if you never give up.”

It was a victory that saved the Aztec soul. — JM

Lessons Learned, Aztec Women Preparing for 2022 Revival

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for this season," Mattera said.

"Like everyone else, we faced many challenges, but I was very proud of the fact that we stayed together.

"We had to play several matches without a full team, and even giving up 1 or 2 points right from the start, but the effort never varied, and they gave each other all that they had every day, which I found very commendable. Plus their academic performance was terrific, despite having to take all classes on-line."

Mattera said several factors, including the anticipated arrival of a talented transfer, has raised his expectations for next year's competition.

"For next year," Mattera said, "as we hopefully move back in to some normalcy, we are really going



Mattera

to have a terrific team.

"Everyone except Abbie (Mulbarger) will be returning, Julia Jordan will be back with us after opting out this season, and we will be adding a wonderful transfer student athlete who will really be a difference maker for us (See Page 2).

"So," Mattera said, "the future looks to be very bright, and hopefully mask-free when we return for the Fall."

The returning teammates include Nnena Nadozie of Los Angeles. This season, Nadozie and Tamara Arnold, a senior from Olten, Switzerland, won All Mountain West Conference singles honors.

Nadozie and Alicia Melosch, a junior recruit from Germany now residing in LaJolla, won All Mountain West Conference honors as a doubles team.

After 'Crazy Year,' Aztec Men's Coach Says He's 'Excited for Next Year'

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returning All-Mountain West Conference singles player in Johannes Seeman, our number one player and an All-Mountain West doubles tandem of Seemann and Victor Castro."

Seeman, a native of Estonia, is a transfer from Fresno State. Castro is a Brazilian who transferred from Cerritos College

In an email, Carswell said "We have a group that gained valuable experience.

"Along with the return of Jules Auffray, Alex Scemanenco and

our new recruits, this has me excited for next year!"

Scemanenco, a transfer from UC Davis, is from Cardiff by the Sea.

Affray, a freshman in 2019, is from Hyeres, France and trained at the Mouratoglu Tennis Academy.

Carswell praised Aaro Pollanen, a senior from Helsinki who had been expected to contend for the top 2021 singles position.

"A shoulder injury prevented him from reaching that goal and

his true potential, Carswell said. "He did battle through several singles and doubles

matches serving underhand at times to fight for the Aztecs.

"Without his willingness to play through the adversity of his injury, we would have defaulted a voided singles position and

played with only 5 singles competitors on several occasions.

"Aaro will remain with the team this fall season as a volunteer coach, as he finishes his degree."

Asked for the major lesson he learned in 2021, Carswell reflected:

"Obviously many lessons are taken from a year such as a crazy year. After losing (the chance to compete over) the majority of last year's spring dual match and championship season and this year's Fall Season & MW Spring Championship tournament, you really appreciate what a privilege and pleasure it is to play and compete at SDSU in university athletics at the NCAA Division 1 level."



Carswell