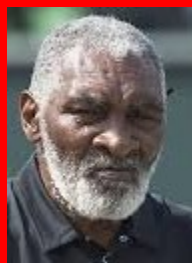


Aztec Tennis Reporter

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SMITH



WILLIAMS

BEFORE THE SLAP, 'KING RICHARD' HIT AN ACE

BY TOM PENNER

Tennis movies are a bit like rock and roll movies, made for a niche audience.

And the best of sports movies aren't really about the sport itself as much as the athletes who play them, their day-to-day lives, histories, their personal wins and losses. It is the life-baggage that makes the sports competition pop to life on screen.

In this respect, the 2021 Warner Brothers release, "King Richard," hits a nice, satisfying ace.

The tale of the Williams sisters' improbable rise to fame, the hard-court "ghetto" lore surrounding it, is both compelling and revelatory; I'd always wondered, for example, how it was the sisters did or did

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WHAT'S INSIDE

Where Now: 2006 Women 3

In Final Surge, Aztecs Win 11 of 14 Matches



Aztec Tennis Reporter photos

ON TARGET: Aztecs Bunyawit Thamchaiwat, top, of Thailand, and Joe Tyler, of Britain score direct hits. Both transferred to SDSU under NCAA rules to help athletes affected by the pandemic. Tyler's University of Iowa eliminated men's tennis as a sport.



Aztecs Raise Funds to Install Cameras Streaming Matches

San Diego State's tennis coaches, aided by the Aztec Club's online fundraising, collected enough money to purchase and install a dozen court cameras for streaming images next season of home matches and training workouts.

"We had around 25 donors, and we reached our goal of around \$20,000," said Nico Vinel, Associate Women's Head Coach. "Really excited about it," he emailed, adding that installation should start in summer.

WOMEN RETURN MOUNTAIN WEST TITLE TO SDSU

San Diego State's women's tennis team recaptured the Mountain West Conference tournament crown with three swift victories that propelled the Aztecs into post-season NCAA competition for the seventh time in nineteen years.

They defeated UNLV, 4-1, for the MW title. But then, deprived of their top player due to a health issue, the women fell to USC, 4-0, in the opening round of NCAA play.

"We had a very talented team this year," said Coach Peter Mattera. "When we were all healthy, I thought that we had the ability to win the conference.

The big question was were we going to be able to have the entire group ready to go for the tournament.

Luckily, that did happen, and we played 3 really good matches in



MATTERA

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How *King Richard's* Dream Sent Venus and Serena to the Top

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not play junior USTA tournaments.

But the story is decidedly Richard's, and it's through his world-weary lens that we glimpse the grittier, more socially realistic aspects of his plight. Stark TV images of the beating of Rodney King remind him of his Jim Crow South upbringing.

But the King, played by runaway Oscar-favorite Will Smith, will not be deterred. He wrote a 78-page business plan for Venus and

Serena before they were even born. They were to be, above all, good human beings, but also straight-A students, versed in music and languages, and, by the way, world-famous tennis champions.

It's the King's dogged allegiance to this plan that exposes its long

odds. Tennis legend Vic Braden tells him frankly nobody's taking his deal.

"It's like asking somebody to believe you have the next two Mozarts living in your house," reasons Vic.

Then there's the local Compton gangsters who occasionally pummel the King for daring to break out of circum-

stance.

And finally, most crucially, is the obvious reality (for the 90's) that tennis is a white-dominated sport.

The King tries to shield the sisters from these realities with humor, tossing out

glibly at a junior tourney that they "can't be the only black family

here and be late!" He is protecting the plan, keeping the muddy realities of the world from tainting the sisters' spirit.

For the King knew the road they were taking. "You're gonna be representing every little black girl on earth," he tells Venus with tears in his eyes.

Nowadays iconic Afro-American

sports and entertainment heroes populate the public consciousness -- from Jackie Robinson, to Arthur Ashe, to Muhammed Ali, to the great Sidney Poitier whose "slap heard round the world" in the Best Picture Oscar winner, "In The Heat of the Night" (1967) brought the black man's plight directly to white America's doorstep.



Elle.com

CHAMPIONS: Saniyya Sidney, left, and Demi Singleton as Venus and Serena in *King Richard*.

Each of these figures share one thing with Venus and Serena Williams: Before they were black icons, even justice warriors, perhaps just posters on an adoring young fan's

bedroom wall, they were folks with families and inner lives, and streets they lived on, who per chance happened to be supremely talented, possessed desire, and the grace and benefit of a dream. A plan.

That they came to symbolize the hopes and aspirations of black America -- hurled by historical tides into the icon stratosphere simply for doing what they loved -- was incidental.

They were, indeed, incidental justice warriors, and the list grows with the recent plight of beleaguered African-American NFL coach Brian Flores, fighting for his right to do what he loves, to live a dream coaching the sport he grew up with, fighting for his dream the way King Richard knew to fight for his. The King's dream came true, incidentally.

Tom Penner is a writer, teaching professional, and member of the 1981-83 Aztec men's tennis team.



Variety

DRILLS: Actors acquired believable strokes from coach in their daily workouts.

Where Are We Now? The 2006 Aztec Women's Tennis Team



1 Milana Yusupov Bahbout: I have been living with my three kids and husband in the Bay Area. While continuing to focus on my interior design business, I am also working as a designer for one of the top tile and stone showrooms in California. Currently I am on maternity leave with the newborn, enjoying spending time with the family and teaching my kids how to play tennis. I am grateful they are into one of my favorite sports. And, I just got my citizenship!

2 Holly Bagshaw: I now live in Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire (England). I work for the National Health Service in a mental health service for children and adolescents in Essex. I got married in 2019 to my partner Amy. We had a son in August 2020 so he is nearly 2! Life is busy but good. I'm back around all my family, which is lovely.

3 Alesya Vidov: Ten years ago, I was teaching tennis in a New York City suburb and thinking of teaching parttime in Argentina. Did I do it? Where am I now? If you know, tell *ATR*.

4 Esther Cadua: In 2011, I worked for the Navy in San Diego. And now? Can you help *ATR* find me?

5 Yuki Hagikawa: I'm working for ASICS, the sporting goods company, in Japan. From 2016-2018, I had been working in Asics America's office as an expat, and lived in Irvine and Boston. Had a great time. Now I came back to Japan, and living in Tokyo. I'm happy to have a job related to sports. I hope to visit California soon, once Covid-19 is over. Miss you all.

6 Dita Hauerlandova: I live in Prague again after moving to the Netherlands for 3 years. Until last September, I coached one of the best Czech juniors age 12-13. Now, thanks to daily meditation for many years, I am adding the mind and inner world of thoughts, emotions, feelings to my coaching. The goal is to help players understand what they gain by meditating and transferring this to the tennis court. I've gotten an offer to consult and partner with the two best Czech juniors, Brenda and Linda Fruhvirtova.

7 Sisse Nielsen: I married my boyfriend from SDSU. We lived and worked in northern California, then moved 7 years ago to Denmark. We have a son, Lucas, and another baby on the way, and we are enjoying family life. After enjoying city life in Copenhagen, we bought a house last year in the suburbs close to family. We travel to the US often - last year we took a month off and went to California and Hawaii. I work for a large corporation in Denmark in charge of Human Resources.

8 Eliska Krausova: I moved to New York from San Diego in 2011. Got a law degree from Fordham in 2014. I am an in-house counsel at Blackstone. My husband and I and 4 year-old daughter Sophie live on the Upper East Side. Baby #2 is coming in May! I took a long break from tennis after graduating in 2008, but picked it back up after law school. The law firm I worked for then had an incredible tennis team, all former college players. I now play as much as I can (not a lot!) with a friend in Central Park.

May 31 note from Dita: "Eliska had her baby girl, Olivia, a few days ago, They are both fine."

Aztec Women Surge to Win Mountain West Tournament Crown

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a row to secure the conference championship.

“It was a total team effort,” Mattera said in an email. “Everyone decided to pour their heart and soul into going after the conference tournament. It was great to get to see them be rewarded for their efforts, and the University and the department are very proud!”

The Aztec men, meanwhile, came within a single victory of reaching the finals of the season-ending Mountain West Conference tournament. After defeating the Air Force Academy, 4-2, they fell to Nevada, 4-1, in the semifinals.

“Being points away from winning a share of the title was a great growth experience,” said Coach Gene Carswell. “Our returning players will have that memory to push them to achieve more in 2023.”

Carswell added “We were much closer to winning a share of the regular season championship. Against Nevada, the doubles point came down to a tiebreaker. We won two matches in straight sets, had three others go three sets (two losses).”

Three Aztec women won Mountain West Play-



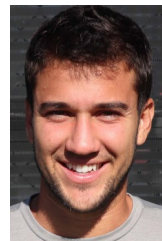
ARNOLD



PITTS



SEEMAN



CASTRO



CARSWELL

er of the Week honors: Tamara Arnold (January 26, March 30), Regina Pitts (March 16), and Bunyawit Thamchaiwat (April 13).

Arnold and Thamchaiwat were chosen for the all-conference team in both singles and doubles.

As the top Mountain West women’s player, Thamchaiwat gained automatic entry in the NCAA singles championships, where she defeated Kari Miller of Michigan, 6-3, 6-1, before losing, 6-2, 7-5, to USC’s 7th-ranked Erin Cayetano. This ran Thamchaiwat’s 2022 singles record to a remarkable 21 victories, 3 losses..

“I am proud of the season she and the team have had,” Coach Mattera told goaztecs.com, “and I am excited to have her back next year.”

Facing covid scheduling complications, the Aztec men saw all of their first month’s matches scrapped.

They did not step onto a court for a team match until the first week of February, when they defeated UC San Diego, 6-1, and Portland, 4-3, then lost to Washington’s undefeated Huskies, 4-0.

Aztec Joe Tyler won Mountain West Men’s Player of the Week honors twice (February 9 and March 2).

Tyler and Aztec Johannes Seeman won all-conference singles honors. Tyler and Aztec Victor Castro earned all-conference doubles honors.

2022 AZTEC WOMEN’S TENNIS (17-7)

- AZTECS 6 Sacramento State 1
- AZTECS 4 UC Riverside 0
- AZTECS 4 UC San Diego 0
- Arizona 4 AZTECS 2
- AZTECS 4 Long Beach State 0
- AZTECS 7 Cal Poly 0
- AZTECS 5 Hawaii 2
- California 5 AZTECS 2
- University of San Diego 5 AZTECS 2
- Princeton 4 AZTECS 3
- AZTECS 4 Dartmouth 0
- AZTECS 4 Boise State 0
- AZTECS 4 Utah State 0
- AZTECS 4 San Jose State 1
- Fresno State 4 AZTECS 2
- AZTECS 4 Wyoming 0
- AZTECS 4 Colorado State 2
- AZTECS 4 UNLV 3
- Air Force 4 AZTECS 0
- Mountain West Championships
- AZTECS 4 Wyoming 0
- AZTECS 4 Colorado State 1
- AZTECS 4 UNLV 1
- NCAA Regionals
- USC 4, AZTECS 0

2022 AZTEC MEN’S TENNIS (8-12)

- AZTECS 6 UC San Diego 1
- AZTECS 4 Portland 3
- Washington 4 AZTECS 0
- UC Santa Barbara 4 AZTECS 2
- Loyola Marymount 4 AZTECS 1
- Cal Poly 4 AZTECS 2
- Gonzaga 4 AZTECS 3
- AZTECS 6 Pomona Pitzer 1
- Utah 4 AZTECS 0
- Pennsylvania 6 AZTECS 1
- AZTECS 4 Air Force 1
- AZTECS 4 Portland 3
- UCLA 7 AZTECS 0
- UNLV 4 AZTECS 3
- Utah State 4 AZTECS 3
- AZTECS 4 New Mexico 1
- AZTECS 4 Boise State 3
- Nevada 4, AZTECS 2
- Mountain West Championships
- AZTECS 4 Air Force 2
- Nevada 4 AZTECS 1