

Tennis Opens Spring Season Close to Home

By Laura J. Clanton
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The DePaul women's tennis team completed their spring season opener at the Northwestern Invitational, earning twelve wins.

They now prepare to host Vanderbilt on Jan. 20 at 3 p.m., for the first major match of the season.

"We've got a lot of talent this year," said head coach Mark Ardizzone.

Day one of the Northwestern Invitational, freshman Patricia Fargas and Rebeca Mitrea earned wins in doubles play scoring 8-4 over LSU. Jasmin Kling and Carolin Neumann also scored wins in doubles, finishing with an 8-4 victory over UIC.

Senior Cali Gustafson and sophomore Kelsey Lawson ended doubles play Friday, with an 8-5 victory over UIC, giving DePaul a 3-3 record in doubles.

Saturday, senior Gia McKnight and Freshman Jasmin Kling landed an 8-1 victory in doubles competition over Northwestern's Brittany Wowchuk and Nida Hamilton. Gustafson and Mitrea successfully defeated UIC's Mariya Kovaleva and Haley Craig 9-8 to finish up doubles play for the weekend.

Three of the four incoming freshman finished singles play on Saturday with straight set victories over UIC. With "only three returners it'll be interesting to see what happens," said McKnight.

Sunday the team finished the weekend with two wins in singles play by McKnight and Lawson over LSU.

"I just go out and play my game," said Lawson.

"We're a young team," said McKnight, "but all fighters."

They are all "major contributors," said Ardizzone, referring to his four freshman players. "They have to grow up fast."

This is a new experience for Ardizzone, coaching a primarily and underclassmen team. However, their success in the warmup and skill in practice leave him looking forward to great things for this season.

The spring opener is a warm-up invitational where the girls can use that time to prepare for the season ahead.

"Over the years we have done worse on this 1st one of the year" said Ardizzone, a result of having a

longer break for Christmas than most other teams. However this year the girls finished with overall success, which they hope will prepare them for their match against No. 15 Vanderbilt.

“Playing a top 20 team first match of the year is not easy,” said Ardizzone.

However, “if we can hang with them we can hang with anyone.”

“Hopefully we can take them off guard,” said McKnight.

This team has “so much energy” said Lawson. “We have really good chemistry this year.”

As the team prepares to face Vanderbilt, Cleveland State and Chicago State this weekend their goal is to “keep getting better,” said Ardizzone.

“We want to see improvement” and keep “improving every week.”

For Lawson, her personal goal for the season is to “remain undefeated at home.”

“We have some tough ones,” she said, however “we have a really good team this year.”

The Blue Demons will face Vanderbilt Friday at 3 p.m. then play a doubleheader with Cleveland State and Chicago State Saturday beginning at 2 p.m. Following this weekend's heavy line-up, the girls will be heading to Indiana to face IPFW on the 28th and Butler on the 29th.