

2007 UMBC Tennis Outlooks

Women

Injuries plagued head coach Keith Puryear's 2006 women's tennis team, and for the first time since 1996, the ladies fell below the .500 mark. But the group battled, produced a solid April and advanced to the America East semi-finals. With five of UMBC's top six players from 2006 returning, the return to health by a couple of key members and a pair of talented newcomers in the fold, Coach Puryear is confident the team can return to its winning ways.

"Our expectations are pretty much the same every year," the 18-year veteran mentor said. "We compete hard in every practice and every match and feel that the results will take care of themselves. This team has a lot of talent and it is my job and theirs to bring it out."

Although there are a few areas that Coach Puryear would like the team to improve upon, he was pleased with the fall program. He hopes the team will feed off of the gritty attitudes of seniors **Elizabeth Anderson** and **Adriana Fonseca**. Anderson was hampered most of last spring with a knee injury, yet she managed to compete in nearly every match and earned the team's "Unsung Hero" award. She possesses a serve topping 100 mph and has developed more consistency with it. The Richboro, Pa., native finished the fall with a 7-2 record and won the "D" singles flight at the Quinnipiac Invitational.

Fonseca underwent major knee surgery in the fall of 2005, yet managed to get back onto the court at the tail end of the spring season. She continued her progress in the fall, looking much more comfortable on the court, and Coach Puryear expects the Bogota, Columbia, native to contribute in both singles and doubles in the spring.

Junior **Pascaline Cette** may have climbed the ladder into one of the top singles' spots, according to Puryear. She posted UMBC's best winning percentage (12-3) last year, including 10 wins in 11 outings in the spring and wins at the No. 5 slot in both of her America East Tournament matches. This fall, the native of Menton, France, reached the singles finals of the Hampton Roads Invitational.

"I have always felt that Pascaline had the potential to play much higher in the lineup," Puryear said. "She is so quick around the court, has great hands and a tremendous myriad of shots."

Junior **Gabi Furdyna** missed last spring with a shoulder injury and began hitting again this fall. She is expected to be at full strength by mid-spring and her big forehand and quickness could gain the native of Wroclaw, Poland, a starting berth.

A pair of sophomores are expected to maintain, if not improve upon, their starting slots from their initial campaigns. **Cornelia Carapcea** competed at the No. 2 singles position last spring and won 11 of her last 13 matches. The native of Romania played with current assistant coach Ale Pederagnana and won seven of the last eight doubles matches at the No. 1 doubles position.

The big hitter on both sides needs to gain a touch more consistency to become a winner against UMBC's tougher competition.

Classmate **Joy Adewumi** competed primarily at the No. 3 singles slot last season and managed to compile a mark of 14-11. The Phoenix, Ariz., native added some new wrinkles to her game this summer and demonstrated a more aggressive approach in a solid fall campaign.

Coach Puryear is excited about the potential of the two newcomers to the program, freshmen **Alice Chen** and **Barbara Cuoto**. Chen was a two-time Maryland State high school finalist, and she displayed her "big game" in the fall. Chen and Cette worked very well together from the start and are the likely No. 1 doubles duo entering the spring.

Cuoto, a native of Brazil, loves to compete and needs only match experience to begin to reach her potential.

Puryear likes the make-up of the 2007 team as the Retrievers and other members of the America East Conference try to knock perennial champion Boston University from its lofty position.

"We have talent throughout our lineup; now it's a matter of finding out who is going to step up and take hold at the top," Puryear said. "If our freshmen and sophomores compete with the tenacity of our upperclassmen, we will have a successful 2007 season."

Men

Two seasons ago, head men's tennis coach Keith Puryear brought in a quartet of talented players, as he knew the Retrievers would face some tough challenges in the America East Conference. UMBC has been very competitive in the league, but just unable to get past conference powers Binghamton and Stony Brook in the quest for a league title.

Those four freshmen, who have experienced a great deal of success in their first two years, are now juniors, and Puryear observed a greater degree of purpose with that group and the other members of the 2007 squad. Overall, six of UMBC's top seven players from a season ago return to fight for positions.

"The guys were very impressive in the fall from day one. They came out focused and continued that from the first practice to the last," Puryear said. "Although the fall doesn't officially count for anything, I liked their focus and intensity and I really feel good about our chances this spring."

Senior **Mehrban Iranshad** preceded those aforementioned juniors, but is a key part of the team's nucleus. He may epitomize the aggressive attitude of the squad and should reprise his role as a key doubles specialist. Classmate **Victor Ng**, attending UMBC on an academic scholarship, played as a freshman and could earn time in doubles or provide depth in singles.

Of the juniors, **Irfan Shamasdin** is making the greatest strides towards securing one of the top seeds. He came on strong at the end of last season, winning both singles matches at the No. 4 position in the America East Championships, and continued in the fall with a victory at the regional championships. His forehand and serve are "plus-shots" and his decision-making has dramatically improved.

The other juniors appear to be following Shamasdin's lead. **David Jackson**, who held down the No. 1 singles position last year, also performed well in the fall and demonstrated more of an attacking style. According to Coach Puryear, **Fernando Ferreira** was playing as well as anyone at the end of the fall. Moreover, he is extremely fit and the Brazilian who grew up on clay courts and is very competent at the net. **Leif Hollowell**, whose fitness level is always at the top of team charts, is utilizing his southpaw serve as a weapon and will challenge the incumbents for a slot in the starting six.

The younger Retrievers will also make an impact on this year's team. Sophomore **Nick Savage-Pollock** produced an outstanding freshman campaign, posting a team-high 30 overall wins, primarily at the No. 2 singles position. Named the team's Most Valuable Athlete, Savage-Pollock possesses an outstanding arsenal of serves and a big forehand and is a mentally tough competitor.

Despite his youth, freshman **Chris Meyer** established himself this fall as a mentally tough player, better known as a "grinder" to his teammates. Meyer won his flights at the Cornell Invitational and the Hampton Roads Invitational and was undefeated in the fall until earning a slot in the regionals. Freshman **Logan Bricker** is regarded as the team's best overall

athlete, as he also started in basketball and competed in track and field in high school.

“We have some quality depth,” Puryear said. “For the first time ever, we had three players in the regional championships. I think the league could be a toss-up this year and I believe we are in the mix.