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Saints Finish 12th in National Tennis Tournament

For the second straight season, the Seward County Saints Men's Tennis team has finished in the top 15 in the country. Last week in Plano, Texas, the Saints accumulated 17 points, including a run into the tournament quarterfinals by doubles partners Lucas Izkovitz and Justin Pena to come out with a 12th place finish among the Nation's elite.

Cristiano Mendes represented the Saints in the top bracket of the tournament in #1 singles and picked up a hard fought 7-5 win in his opening set of the tournament before dropping Troy O'Connell from New Mexico Military 6-0 in the second set to win the match. In the second round Mendes faced a tough matchup in 6th seeded Jose Soto from Vincennes University and fell by matching 6-1 scores to end his Seward career.

The Saints only loss of day one of the tournament came in #2 singles where Felipe Cruz took the court for Seward. Cruz took on Kwame Griffith of ASA College and lost the first set 6-2 before being dropped to the consolation bracket with a 7-6(1) loss in the second set. Cruz received a double bye in the consolation draw and after winning his first set in the quarterfinals 6-3 over Dave Pollack of Scottsdale, lost the next two 6-2, and 10-6 to eliminate him from competition.

Lucas Izkovitz, who was the Saints top point getting through the last two seasons, took on Zach Marroy of Meridian in the first round of the #3 draw. Izkovitz had no problem with his opponent from Mississippi, winning 6-1, 6-1 to move onto the second round to take on 3rd seeded Donovan McSeveney of Collin County for the second time this season. In their first meeting McSeveney was able to win 6-1, 6-2 and he did just about the same this time, ending Izkovitz's run in the tournament with a 6-0, 6-1 victory before eventually going on to win the tournament.

In the #4 singles draw Raphael Machado picked up a point for Seward in the first round with a 6-2, 6-1 win over Kevin Kerndl from DuPage but was unable to advance any further after running into 3rd seeded Taylor Hardy of Abraham Baldwin in the second round who promptly knocked Machado out of the draw with a 6-1, 6-2 victory.

Viktor Polyak of Harford was no problem for the Saints #5 man Riccardo Bassani in the first round of their bracket as Bassani dispatched of Polyak in straight sets 6-0, 6-0 to move to the second round where he met up with a familiar face in Juan Estepa of Johnson County. The match was a rubber match of sorts as Bassani knocked off Estepa 6-3, 6-2 midway through the season in a dual while Estepa returned the favor with a 6-4, 7-5 win in the Regional Tournament one

month ago. Estepa got the last laugh for this year as he took the third match of the year 6-1, 6-4 to finish a solid rookie campaign for Bassani.

In the Saints final singles draw of the weekend it was Justin Pena going at things in the #6 bracket and he made short work of his opening round opponent Gabe Llewellyn from Marion Military with a 6-0, 6-2 victory but got a rude awakening in his first trip to nationals as he ran up against #1 seeded Gelawdiyos Haile from Georgia Perimeter in the second round who beat him 6-1, 6-0 to end his year.

Izkovitz and Pena teamed as the #1 doubles squad for the Saints and made a good run in the tournament, winning 6-2, 6-3 in the opening round over Felipe Dos Santos and Hunter McCawley of Harford before knocking off Andrew Mayer and Dave Pollack from Scottsdale 4-6, 6-2, 7-5 in the second round to reach the quarterfinals. In the round of eight they fell to 3rd seeded Matt Campbell and Vasili Caripi of Tyler 6-1, 6-4 but went out with their head held high with a 5th place finish at the tournament.

Following a great run at the tournament a year ago, Machado and Cruz paired again in the #2 doubles draw in 2012. They won their first match 6-1, 7-6(3) over Travis Burdick and Nick Georgian of Mississippi Gulf Coast but were the second casualty for the Saints against Tyler JC competition as 5th seeded Tassilo Schmid and Adam Taylor beat them 6-1, 6-0 in the second round to finish their run.

In #3 doubles it was the Brazilian combo of Mendes and Bassani for Seward County and the two picked up a 6-2, 6-4 win in their opening round against Ryan Blauw and Andy Urzua of DuPage but could advance no further as 5th seeded Trutz Henssen and Tim Kuekelhaus of Abraham Baldwin beat them in an exciting match 7-5, 5-7, 6-3 to finish the Saints play at the tournament.

Seward finished 12th at the tournament with 17 points, tied with USC Lancaster while Laredo went on to win and Texas teams claimed the top 3 spots on the week. Region VI rival Cowley finished in 6th place while Johnson County was 8th.

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