

Seward Tennis Places 14th at Nationals

The Seward County Saints wrapped up a successful year this weekend in Plano, Texas, turning in a 14th place finish at the NJCAA National Tournament. Two Saints made it to the round of eight in singles action while all six Seward singles players and all three doubles teams either finished in the top nine of the main draw, or finished in the top five of the consolation bracket.

The Saints captain Justin Pena took the court in #1 singles for Seward. It looked like it was going to be a quick exit from the tournament for the South African as he dropped the first set 6-3 and was down 3-1 at the change-over in the second set to Harford's Farai Chiridza. Chiridza stumbled and Pena took advantage midway through the second set, coming back to win 7-5 in a tiebreak to force a third set. In the third set, Pena again found himself in a 3-0 hole and once again he pulled out the comeback card and won 6 of the final 7 games of the set to win 6-4 to take the match 2-1. In the second round Pena ran up against 2nd seeded Jerel Pleasant of Georgia Perimeter. Pleasant had no trouble with Pena in the first set, winning 6-2, but Pena made him work in the second set, sending the set to a late tiebreak before Pleasant was able to win it 7-6 (4) to end Pena's season in 9th place.

After posting an 8-8 regular season record for the Saints, sophomore Donnersson Penna made the most of his final tournament in Seward green and white at the National Tournament. Penna won easily 6-0, 6-1 in his first round matchup against Harrison Warren of Meridian to advance to the second round. In the second round he had a little bit tougher of a time with Aaron Longoria of Temple as the two split the first two sets with Penna winning set number one 6-2 before Longoria flipped the script in a 6-3 win in the second set to send it to a third set tiebreak. In the third set Penna regained his form, winning 6-3 to advance to the quarterfinal round of the tournament. In the quarters Penna ran into a buzzsaw in 3rd seeded Patrick Clynes of Collin who downed the Saints star 6-3, 6-0 to end his tournament in 5th place.

With high expectations going into the tournament, the Saints #3 player Daniel Alonte was disappointed early on in the tournament as he fell 6-3, 6-2 to Romar Hernandez of Marion Military to send him to the consolation bracket. After getting a bye in the first round of the consolation bracket, Alonte defeated TJ Carter of Meridian 6-1, 6-1 to move to the consolation quarters where he was unable to finish his tournament, defaulting to Colin Ferry of Elgin to end his season.

Luke Robertson got the Saints some quick points in #4 singles, winning 6-2, 6-1 over Christian Jackson of Meridian in his first round matchup to advance to the second round. On day two of the tournament Robertson pulled a huge upset over 3rd seeded Luis Hernandez of Laredo, dropping the Palominos star by matching 6-4 scores to move on to the tournament quarterfinals. Coming off the upset, Robertson was set to have another date with a seeded opponent, but was forced to

withdraw from the tournament and defaulted to 6th seeded Kaimalu Cope of Scottsdale to finish his season just three wins short of a national title.

Liberal's Josh Hamilton took the court in #5 singles for the Saints. Hamilton achieved a school first in the first round as he became the first ever Liberal native to win a match in the main draw of the National Tournament when he knocked off Chase Kasper of Meridian 6-2, 6-3. Hamilton's joy was somewhat short-lived though as in the second round he drew 2nd seeded Dave Pollack of Scottsdale and could never get going, losing 6-1, 6-0 to give him a 9th place finish.

Mid-season acquisition Adrian Amado was never able to get things going in his matches at #6 singles for Seward. Amado was blanked 6-0, 6-0 in the first round by Grant Bell of Gulf Coast and had his tournament ended in the consolation bracket with another 6-0, 6-0 loss to Nino Newberry of Paradise Valley.

Pena and Robertson teamed up at #1 doubles with high expectations for the Saints. In the first round they had little trouble with Logan and Randall of Lewis and Clark, taking them down 6-0, 6-4 to move to the second round. In the second round they took the court against a familiar duo in Myburgh and Tapfuma of Seminole State who came into the tournament seeded 6th. Pena/Robertson started off well, taking the first set from the Trojans 6-4, but Myburgh and Tapfuma battled back to take the second set by the same 6-4 score to send the match to a third set. The third set was one for the ages. The two teams battled back and forth without either being able to take control. They were deadlocked after 12 games and went to a tiebreak where Seminole was able to finally come away with the win with a 10-6 victory to win the set 7-6. That was it for Pena/Robertson who finish the year in 9th place in the top doubles spot.

Penna and Alonte were also first round winners at #2 doubles, taking their opening match in straight sets 6-2, 6-4 to move onto the second round. The duo was not able to continue their road in the tournament however as they withdrew in the next round and defaulted to Hoeversen and Tapia of Cowley to end their tournament.

The Saints #3 doubles squad in Hamilton and Amado battled in their first match against Paradise Valley's Madrigal and Ortiz, splitting the first two sets 6-3 and 7-5, but ran out of gas in the third set, losing 6-0 to drop to the consolation bracket. It was another Seward/Cowley matchup in the consolation quarters as Hamilton and Amado dueled against Keller and Rodriguez from their Region VI mates. Keller and Rodriguez flexed their muscles, winning the first set 6-0 before ending the Saints season with a 6-2 second set win.

Seward finished the tournament in 14th place overall, 2.5 points behind Lewis and Clark and .5 point in front of Marion Military. Tyler wins yet another National title, blowing away the competition with 47 points with second place ASA checking in at 35.5 points. Cowley was the top finisher out of the Region with 24 points, good for 10th place and Johnson County was right behind them in 11th place with 20.5 points.

NJCAA NATIONAL TOURNAMENT FINAL RESULTS

<http://www.scccsaints.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=

6865:mtn-njcaa-national-tournament&catid=221:Scoreboard>

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