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Seward Doubles Team Wins National Title

From the lowest seeded team in the field, to the tournament championship, Seward County freshmen Ronzai Saurombe and Alejandro Gonzalez made history Saturday, becoming the first Saints tennis team in history to win a National Championship. The pair cruised to the title match on Saturday where they had no problem with their 3rd seeded foes from Fresno City College, winning 6-4, 6-2 to capture the 2013 ITA National Championship in Junior College Doubles.

Saurombe and Gonzalez were certainly the most unexpected team to reach the finals after entering the tournament as the 8th and lowest seed. Their opposition probably wasn't anyone's pick either as Alec Bessinger and Adrien Varenne from Fresno City College were an unknown as a non-NJCAA team and the 3rd seeded team in the tournament. The first set was a tight one between the Saints and the Rams with the teams going back and forth to 3-3 before a Seward break put them ahead 4-3. Gonzalez held serve to put the Saints on top 5-3, but Fresno held their own to take the score to 5-4. With Saurombe serving for the set, the Saints and Rams put on an epic display of endurance in a game that lasted 26 points and 10 dueces before Seward came out on top to take the set 6-3. The Saints were on a roll in the second set, quickly breaking the Rams twice to take a 4-0 lead. With the championship smell getting closer, the Saints took the score to 5-1 and were just one game away from a national title. Seward had a chance to break and take the match, but Fresno City held them off for the time being, making the score 5-2. Serving for the match, Saurombe came up clutch, just as he has in nearly every match of his young Seward County career. The Seward freshman held serve and won the game for the Saints, making Seward County the 2013 ITA National Champions of junior college doubles.

With their title in tow, the Saints then played in a unique event in which ITA organizers titled the Super Bowl, in which the four small college champions (Junior College, NCAA Division II, NCAA Division III, and NAIA) champions would battle in a four team, winner take all tournament with an invite to the NCAA Division I National Tournament on the line.

The Saints freshmen duo of Saurombe and Gonzalez drew the NCAA Division III duo of Branter Jones and Palmer Campbell from Middlebury College in one half of the semifinal bracket. The teams traded breaks early in the first set to 2-2 before Saurombe uncharacteristically was broken to give the Panthers a 3-2 lead. The teams traded the next two games to 4-3, but Middlebury took the final two games of the set to win 6-3. The Saints couldn't regain their momentum from earlier in the tournament as they were broken two more times early in the second to fall behind 3-0. Things didn't get any better as the match came to a close as Saurombe and Gonzalez simply ran

out of gas, falling 6-1 to end their weekend in Fort Myers.

Saurombe and Gonzalez entered the weekend as the first ever Seward County Men's players to earn a trip to the ITA National Tournament and come out of the weekend as the first Seward tennis team on either the men's or women's side to earn a National Championship.

The pair improve to 14-2 together in their first fall in Liberal and will look to bring home another championship On October 25-26 when they travel to the Tabor Tournament to wrap up the Saints 2013 fall schedule.

While their dreams of a National Championship came to an end Saturday morning in Fort Myers, Florida, Seward County freshmen Paula Lopez and Paula Coyos kept their heads high and finished strong, winning their third place match at the 2013 ITA National Tournament to bring home a 2-1 record from the two day event.

After defeating 3rd seeded Mississippi Gulf Coast on day one of the tournament to reach the semifinals, Lopez and Coyos opposed 2nd seeded Joanna Savva and Fausthyara Pietersz of Tyler Junior College in their next match of the tournament. The Lady Saints duo got off to a slow start, getting broken in each of their first serving opportunities to quickly fall behind 4-0. Then it was their turn for a break and they did just that, breaking Savva and then holding serve to get back to 4-2. Momentum was on their side as they then broke Pietersz to get to within one game at 4-3, but the Apaches got their break back with a win in the eighth game to take a 5-3 lead. The teams traded the next two games and the slow start proved fatal for the Lady Saints as Savva and Pietersz took the first set 6-4. The second set was even early on as the teams held serve to 3-3 before Tyler picked up the first break to take a 4-3 lead. The break seemed the one that broke the camel's back, or the Lady Saints spirit in this case, as Seward dropped the final two games after the break to fall 6-3 to end their championship run.

Their tournament was not done however and they had to face the tall task of competing in a third place match later that afternoon. They took on another duo coming off of a disappointing loss in Olivia Erlandsson and Jazz Whittaker of St. Petersburg College. Lopez and Coyos got off to a good start, taking a 2-1 lead, but dropped the next two games to fall behind 3-2. Seward earned two huge breaks to get themselves back on track and took the lead back 5-4 before Lopez served the set out with a win to take the first set 6-4. The Lady Saints started the second set with an all-important break and quick went up 2-0 after holding serve. The Lady Saints continued to push and held their two game advantage to 4-2. Neither the Lady Saints or Titans could break their opposing server in the final four games and they traded games until Seward took the set 6-4 to win third place.

The third place finish is the highest for any Seward duo

since Alejandra Miranda Sanchez and Veronica Bansemer finished 2nd at the tournament in 2003.

Lopez and Coyos improve to 13-4 on the fall with just one tournament remaining, October 25-26 at Tabor.

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