

2018 PREVIEW: Grace Tennis kicks off season this week

WINONA LAKE, Ind. - Grace's men's and women's tennis teams will get their 2018 fall seasons underway this week.

The squads will open up at home on Tuesday with a match against rival Bethel at Miller Athletic Complex.

WOMEN'S TENNIS

Grace's women's tennis team is prepped for a big year under head coach Marcus Moore. The Lady Lancers posted a 9-6 record in 2017 and return their top five players.

They are led by seniors Jenna Jackson and Molly Fitzpatrick who have experienced the program's growth since their freshman seasons.

Emily Mast was Grace's No. 1 singles player and dominated at No. 1 doubles alongside Carrie Copeland. Mast's 13-2 mark at No. 1 doubles set Grace's program record, and Copeland finished second at 12-2.

Shelby Bankson picked up 13 wins overall as a sophomore, including an 8-7 doubles' record.

Moore was impressed by how the Lady Lancers had improved in the summer, commenting that it was one of the best offseasons in recent memory.

"I'm really excited to get started. I know the girls have been working hard on their own to prepare for a grinding tennis season," he said.

Moore has brought in a pair of freshmen to compete for starting spots. Jayna Armstrong from Noblesville and Morgan Mast from Fairfield (Emily's sister) will be "counted on to contribute immediately," Moore said. "They are very talented players, and I'm anxious to get them started."

The Lady Lancers have multiple goals in mind. One in particular is to break the all-time wins' record. Grace fell two wins short last fall.

"I expect our girls to come in everyday and work as hard as they can to improve. I think if we stay healthy, their goal to set the wins record is within reach," he said.

MEN'S TENNIS

Grace's men's tennis team has high expectations for the year under head coach Andy Lewis. The Lancers are aiming to better last year's 4-6 record with a talented crop of newcomers.

Returning to Grace's lineup are seniors Conner Bates and Caleb Yoder. A trio of juniors (Diego Zamora, Arturo Fonseca, Lucas Fonseca) are also poised to help the Lancers climb up the Crossroads League standings.

Grace took a big hit after last year, graduating three of its top four players after the season. But Lewis was

confident that this recruiting class had the talent to match or even surpass last year.

“I am excited to watch this team this year. I get a front row seat to some great tennis,” Lewis said. “We will have some very strong parts to our lineup, and we should have some players do well at ITAs.”

The Lancers brought in three freshmen and two transfers for 2018. Pavle Popovic, from Serbia, played last year at NCAA Division I Middle Tennessee State, and Carlos Gomez is a junior from Colombia.

Freshmen Max Rozas (Chile), Jacob Gray (Greenwood High School) and Steven Gutzwiller (New Palestine High School) give Lewis a glut of options to use this fall.

Rozas is rated in the top five of Chile in the juniors’ division, and Gray played No. 1 at Greenwood as a tall, lefty athlete.

“We are going to focus on effort this year. These players have a lot of potential, and it will be neat to see how far that talent takes us with hard work,” he said.

Lady Lancers shut out Graceland

DES MOINES, Iowa - The season-opening trip for Grace’s women’s soccer team produced a pair of wins in Iowa.

The Lady Lancers blanked a strong Graceland squad 1-0 on Saturday to improve to 2-0 on the season.

Shelby Fort picked up her second game-winning goal of the season with an early strike.

It did not take long for Grace to take control of the match against Graceland. The Lady Lancers were fouled in their attacking third, and Corinne Villalobos quickly restarted to set up the attack.

Shelby Fort drove toward the top of the penalty box and split two defenders with a pass to Sacia Hanson on the right side. Hanson beat a defender and passed to Jenni Phillips directly in front of the goal.

Phillips held off her defender and alertly teed up a pass to Fort, who blasted in her second goal of the season at the 3:03 mark.

The rest of the match was relatively even. The Yellow Jackets held a slight 12-10 edge in shot attempts over the course of the game.

Grace had four shots on goal compared to five for Graceland; Graceland also owned a 10-3 advantage in fouls.

“This was a good match for the Grace College women’s soccer program today. Graceland was solid all over, and it was a battle. Our crew has so much respect for their game,” said Grace head coach Michael Voss. “Ultimately we settled in and took control in key sections, and we rode the lead by being dangerous. I’m proud of our women today. They came of age.”

Corinne Villalobos led Grace with three shots, two on goal, and Liz Van Wormer took two shots.

Bethany Blackwood picked up another shutout in goal for Grace, her second straight to start her freshman season. She made five saves in 90 minutes.

The Lady Lancers are back home on Wednesday, hosting Michigan-Dearborn at 6 p.m. The men’s soccer team

will follow the women for a doubleheader at 1st Source Bank Field.

Florida National hands Lancers first loss

COLUMBIA, Ky. - An early defensive lapse cost Grace's men's soccer team on Saturday in a 4-1 defeat against Florida National.

The Lancers were playing their second consecutive day after tying No. 9 Lindsey Wilson through 110 minutes of action. Grace's slow start resulted in its first loss of the season.

Florida National took advantage of the Lancers in the early stages.

The Conquistadors cranked out two shots in the first three minutes. Grace never recovered and surrendered the first goal of the match in the fifth minute.

The Lancers struggled to regain control of the contest and quickly surrendered two more goals in the 11th and 12th minutes.

Florida National went into halftime ahead 3-0 despite only taking three shots on goal. The Lancers recorded five shots and two on goal before halftime, but they were unable to get on the scoresheet.

Grace picked up two corner kicks and a shot in the opening minutes of the second half but to no avail. The Lancers outshot Florida National 7-4 over the final 45 minutes, but Grace was unable to pull closer.

The Conquistadors scored their fourth goal at the 82:25 mark.

Grace managed a consolation goal at the end. Damon Binkley finished off an assist from Kyle Smith in the final minute of play for the final 4-1 scoreline.

"Florida National is a solid team with strong, composed players. We didn't start well, and the score reflected it. The game evened out after 15 minutes, but by then it was too late," said Grace head coach Matt Hotchkin. "We will learn from this and move on. Togo Nurusawa played a good game, and I also thought that Korry Hamlin and Kyle Smith showed a solid work rate."

Grace was only outshot 14-12 in the match, and both teams recorded seven corner kicks.

The Lancers return home on Wednesday for an 8 p.m. match against Aquinas. The match will be the second half of a women's/men's doubleheader at 1st Source Bank Field.

FORT WAYNE, Ind. - The Purdue Fort Wayne women's volleyball team split the final day of its own Purdue Fort Wayne Invitational Presented by Hyatt Place. The Mastodons defeated Liberty 3-1 (43-41, 25-20, 19-25, 25-21), before falling to tournament champion Oakland 3-1 (24-26, 25-23, 23-25, 18-25).

Against Liberty, Nicole Rightnowar earned a double-double with 18 kills and 13 digs, while tying a career-high with three aces. Katie Crowe earned a double-double with 15 kills and 15 digs. Elizabeth Fuerst finished with 17 kills. Madison Jaqua also earned a double-double, finishing with a match-high 51 assists to go along with 14 digs. Elizabeth Britner led the way with 15 digs.

In the morning match, the Mastodons and Flames battled it out in an epic first set. The two teams fought through 15 lead changes and 28 ties, combining for 84 points in the first set alone. After both teams were unable to connect on multiple set points, it was the Mastodons who were able to pull out the win on a pair kills by Crowe. Purdue Fort Wayne's 43 points in the first set are the most ever by a Mastodon squad, and rank tied for fifth most all-time in Division I 25-point scoring era, three points off the NCAA record set by Santa Clara in 2017. The two sides combined to finish the first set with 53 kills, 29 by the Mastodons.

After an incredible first set, the Mastodons maintained their focus and used a 5-0 run midway through the frame to go up 2-0. Liberty controlled the third set as it led from wire-to-wire. The 'Dons would trail early in the fourth set, but battled back. Down 7-4, Purdue Fort Wayne went on a 4-1 run to tie it, before using a 5-1 advantage to take the lead, and eventually the match.

Versus the Golden Grizzlies, Rightnowar again led the way with a double-double, 16 kills and 12 digs. Fuerst added 11 kills and four blocks, while Sandra Hoevens had 10 kills and hit .409. Crowe had a match-high 19 digs to go along with nine kills. Jaqua earned her second double-double of the day with 44 assists and 13 digs. Britner capped off her night with 13 digs.

In the nightcap, Purdue Fort Wayne trailed early but battled back, tying the first set 23-23, and forcing extra points. The 'Dons were unable to complete the comeback as Oakland notched the final two points. The 'Dons again trailed early in the second. Down by as many as four, the Mastodons went on a 5-0 run late in the set to take a 22-21 lead. Fuerst capped off the comeback with a kill to give the 'Dons the frame.

A hot start for the Mastodons in the third set was not enough to hang on, as the Golden Grizzlies came back to pick up the frame. Tied 8-8 in the fourth, the 'Dons were unable to keep Oakland quiet, as it scored five straight points to take the lead and eventually the match.

For her efforts on the weekend, Elizabeth Fuerst was named to the All-Tournament Team.

Purdue Fort Wayne takes to the road for the first time this season when the Mastodons travel to in-state rival IUPUI Tuesday, August 28, for a 7 p.m. Match.

Grace Athletics adds Marcus Moore to staff

WINONA LAKE, Ind. - Grace College's athletic department is pleased to announce the hiring of Marcus Moore starting this fall.

Moore will serve in a new position on staff as the Athletics Admissions Recruiting Coordinator. In this new strategic role, he will assist all 17 varsity programs in recruitment. Additionally, he will have a focus on the new initiative for the growth of junior varsity and club sports on Grace's campus.

“Grace is a special place and has had a big role in my life over the past two decades. I look forward to the challenges of this new position, and I’m eager to see a large number of future Grace College athletes experience our growing campus,” Moore said. “I’m excited to be able to work for a staff and administration that I look up to so much and to come work in an environment that gets me excited every day.”

Moore will aid in all aspects of recruiting prospective student-athletes, including facilitating campus visits, coordinating tours and scheduling meetings with coaches and professors.

Additionally, he will continue in his role as the head coach for Grace’s women’s tennis program, which he has done since 2017.

“We are very excited to have Marcus lead in this strategic role on our campus,” said Grace Director of Athletics Chad Briscoe. “His ability to recruit at a high level will be a tremendous complement to our entire coaching staff. His background as a Lancer alum and current head coach will also further help the growth and success of all our athletic programs.”

Moore was a star basketball player from Grace from 2004-08. He was an NAIA and NCCAA All-American who graduated as the No. 2 all-time leading scorer in Grace’s history with 2,351 points.

Lancers top Rochester in season opener

WINONA LAKE, Ind. - A free kick goal from Breno Oliveira lifted Grace’s men’s soccer team to a 1-0 victory on Tuesday in the season opener against Rochester.

Oliveira’s 20-yard free kick beat Rochester’s goalkeeper in the 62nd minute for the game’s only goal.

The Lancers (1-0) recorded their first shutout of the season with Kurt Hamlin making two saves in 90 minutes of action as goalkeeper.

The first half started timidly for both teams, particularly for the Lancers in their first half of action. Grace outpossessed the Warriors (0-2), but Rochester limited Grace’s threatening opportunities.

Both teams entered halftime scoreless, but the Lancers were far from prepared to settle for a draw.

It did not take long for Grace to find its offensive rhythm in the second half. Just three minutes after halftime, the Lancers threatened. Ulisses Miranda got a shot off inside the penalty box and beat the goalkeeper, but his shot glanced off the goalpost. The rebound fell back to Miranda, but his close-range shot was saved.

Minutes later Miranda had another shot in the box that sailed above the crossbar, and Marcelo Talamas also missed high.

Not long after, Oliveira tried a free kick from the left side of the field that was headed off a goalpost by a Warriors’ defender.

The chances came at a furious pace for Grace throughout the second half. Over the final 45 minutes, Grace

outshot Rochester 17-4.

The game-winning moment originated from the attack of Togo Narusawa, who was fouled at the edge of the penalty box. Oliveira stepped up and bent his free kick around the wall and into the back of the net at the 61:45 mark.

Rochester had a handful of chances in response, looking for an equalizer. But Grace's defense proved up to the task. Josiah Osborn, Ivan Santagiuliana, Romain Chantrel and Joshua Coupar were solid protecting Grace's net after halftime.

Grace nearly added to its tally multiple times in the final minutes, most notably with a pair of shots from Cody Boerema which were blocked. Oliveira also had a cleverly curled shot that whizzed just outside the far post.

For the match, Grace held a 19-10 shot advantage. The Lancers also had a 6-1 edge in corner kicks.

"I'm happy for the win, but overall we didn't produce the result we were hoping for. We know that we can do better to execute on our opportunities. We missed a lot of chances in front of the goal, and I thought that messed with our psyche a bit," said Grace head coach Matt Hotchkin. "It's early in the season, and we will just have to work on our finishing touches. But credit to their keeper for some fantastic saves as well. Now we prepare for a tough weekend schedule with two excellent teams. Thanks to all who came out to support us tonight!"

The Lancers travel to Kentucky this weekend for a two-day tournament. Grace will play No. 9 Lindsey Wilson on Friday at 7 p.m. and Florida National on Saturday at 7 p.m.