Chat With Men's Tennis Coach Dale Short

March 8, 2002 · MT Media Relations

This is the first time we have been ranked in the top 25 in past four years; what are you feelings concerning the ranking?
The ratings come out every week, and there are only two more weeks that are based on a vote. There are eight people who vote, one person that is the head of each region, and either for good or for bad, I am the head of this region. The vote is a little different than the computer, which is based on a formula that could skew things one way or another. **How do you feel this year's team is competing?**
We certainly have the ingredients to do something fairly special. As I've told a lot of people, we are good enough to beat a top five, a top 10 team or to beat anybody in the country, but we are also fragile enough to lose to teams within the top 50. It's kind of like a basketball team that may be really good, but there is going to be that given day when they lose to a team in the top 50, but then beat another team within the top 20. Last year we didn't meet adversity quite the way I would have liked to, and this year we seem to be handling adversity a little bit better. For example, when you are ranked 20th in the country and play a good schedule, you have everything to lose and very little to gain. When they make a run at us in a match situation, we're not panicking for the most part, but handling it with pretty good poise. That shows that this year's team has matured quite a bit over last year's. **How does this year's team compare to that of last year's team?**
It's very similar as far as overall talent, but the thing that's different is that they are a little more mature this year. They also have a little more depth. Last year we had seven really good players but lost one of them right in the middle of the spring season, and then we had six players, three of which were freshmen in the starting lineup. So we were new and not quite as mature, but now they are a year older and have much more experience under their belts. Also after that sixth spot we had a pretty good drop off, so if someone was sick, injured or not playing real well, we didn't have the flexibility that we have this year. This year the guys are a little bit better at seven and eight. Everybody is playing better as a whole this year. I haven't been real happy with the last two games that we've played, but that's the unique thing about this team, because we have been figuring out how to win when we're not playing at our best. Where as last year we would have probably lost in a

tight situation, and now we are figuring out a way to come through it. **How do our individual rankings look?**
Oliver Foreman and Robert Gustafsson, who are ranked fifth, had a great fall season and started the spring season off strong. They have lost two of their last three matches but in doubles you just play a pro set, which is almost like a crapshoot. You have to come out there with blazing saddles. It used to be that you played two out of three sets, which means that you could have a bad game or two but could bounce back and come through. When you're just playing a pro set, which is basically one set that's slightly elongated that is the first to eight games and win by two, you're going to have some set backs. You may have a bad game or two or you could get beat by a team that's not ranked by simply not holding serve. And they have lost to a couple of teams like that, but based on what they did in the fall and thus far, they are definitely going to stay in the top 20. They have to keep working to improve and not rest on where they've been. One big over-riding thing that I keep preaching is that the key is mental, you can't play to protect because you won't have anything to protect before long, and that's the thing that you must keep fighting. As long as they think, "I can't lose this match," they are probably going to lose, and it's partly the role that they're in and not used to being in. **Explain the NCAA team competition format.**
First of all you have two things in college tennis that makes it somewhat unique. You have individual rankings, where at the end of the season there is a tournament where individual players could qualify for an NCAA tournament, and you also have a team tournament. Based on certain individuals like the top two or three players will always play pretty good players and a lot of those players are ranked, and as long as they can keep on winning they can keep their individual ranking up, as well as the doubles and so forth. It's incredibly difficult to explain the point system, but it's based on a formula. If you lose to a non-ranked player or a non-ranked team, you lose more points, but if you beat someone ranked higher or a team that's higher you get more points. So it's complicated, but our focus now is 100 percent team. We lose as a team and we win as a team. You have certain individuals that have good days, and you will certain individuals that will have bad days that are completely masked, at least should be, because if it's not, we have a problem. Our focus is on team and cannot be on any one individual at this point, because in the spring all we do is play duel matches that are one team against another team; it's not against one another like it is in the fall.
How has the new facility helped in recruiting?
Obviously we are in our emphasis stage of that, and it makes a big difference. We now have a competitive outdoor facility with most teams in the country. We may not be up there with the top 20 schools, which I'm sure have better facilities, but this is a very competitive facility now. It allows us to not have to avoid the issues when it comes to facilities, where we used to have to focus on other things in the program that were much better. **How do you deal with placing the foreign players in jobs and places to live for the summers?**
Most of them are going home for the summer, and they will work in their home place, but they are legally allowed to work on campus, so there are one or two that may stay and help work our camps. Once they graduate from school, they can legally work in the states for one year without their green card, and they are allowed to borrow off of that one year. For example they could borrow three months off of that one-year to work for the summer. Their job has to relate to their field of study though. There are one or two of them that are looking to do that, and I'm trying to help get them jobs with former players and some friends that are directors at clubs and tennis places around the country who are looking for temporary help during the summer. **Is there anything that you would like to say to the Blue Raider fans?**
I would love to see them out supporting us. I think we have an excellent product and many of them would probably be surprised at the level at which we play. We would also welcome anybody who

would be interested in receiving our newsletter. We have a newsletter that we send out once a week directly to them. We have about three hundred people on it now, and it's helped a lot with attendance, where we would normally get 10 or 20 people to come out, there are now 100-200 people out there to support us. It makes a big difference how the players feel. Hopefully they can get where they can follow our sport and follow our team.

Printed on December 8, 2013
Original URL: http://www.goblueraiders.com/content.cfm/id/911