

MEN'S TENNIS SETS AIM ON 2009 SPRING SEASON

BY JAMES ETTER

The Auburn men's tennis team is looking to their spring season with optimism and toughness.

With the spring season underway, head coach Eric Shore is excited about the possibilities that this season may hold.

The Tigers will open its season at the Auburn Spring Classic with individual competition. However, the official 2009 spring team season didn't begin until Indoor Qualifier in Boise, Idaho.

"This Indoor Qualifier is a new way for us to start our season," Shore said, "It was an extremely difficult beginning to the spring."

With a demanding start to the season, Coach Shore is relying on senior Alexey Tsyrenov and sophomore Tim Puetz to guide the team to a smooth beginning.

"I'm expecting our top two guys from last year, Tsyrenov and Puetz, to come back and help lead us," Shore said. "These guys realize that they have got to carry the bread this year and are ready to help lead this team during the spring."

Along with Tsyrenov, the Tigers welcome back four more seniors to the squad this year in Milan Krnjetin, Lukas Marsoun, Hunter Mills and Alex Petropoulos.

"We have depth all down the line," Shore said. "We will have plenty of experience and leadership to succeed this year, and I'm counting on those guys to help us out."

Also returning to the Plains this year are junior Nick Maurillo and freshman Michel Monteiro.

New to the scene, however, are the two freshmen Powell Porter and Alex Stamchev.

"I think that Alex is going to be a part of our program for a long time," Shore said. "I'm expecting good things from him and he's been a solid acquisition for the team thus far. I know that he is going to help us a lot this spring."

"Another freshman that I am excited about is Powell Porter. He's working hard and I hope that he'll be able to help the team out this spring."

With an optimistic attitude about his team, Shore is focused on attacking a difficult spring schedule.

"We played an extremely tough schedule last year and it is going to be tough again this year," Shore stated. "We are starting in Boise, Idaho, as part of a challenging weekend, but that will be an excellent way to prepare ourselves for SEC competition."

As part of the SEC schedule, Auburn will face six preseason top-25 teams, including No. 3 Georgia, No. 8 Tennessee, No. 9 Mississippi and No. 10 Florida.

In order to succeed among such a strong conference, Shore mentioned that the main focus of the team has been on improving the consistency in both singles and doubles competition.

"We don't want to rely on one or two guys every time we go out there and compete," Shore said. "Better consistency throughout the team will really help us to relieve some of the pressure."

With a difficult spring season on the horizon, Shore's excitement and optimism has already begun to spill over and energize the rest of the team.

"We want to win," Tsyrenov said. "We're ready to do that."



PLAYER PROFILE

ALEXEY TSYRENOV

Auburn has been a home away from home for senior tennis standout Alexey Tsyrenov. Beginning his career in Russia, Tsyrenov decided to take his competition to the Plains after discovering what the Auburn program had to offer.

"Coach Shore really wanted me to come and play here," Tsyrenov remarked. "I really enjoyed getting that kind of attention."

Coach Shore's enthusiasm played an influential role in Tsyrenov's decision, but the attention that he received upon his arrival was something completely different.

"I've noticed how much they support me here," he said. "They do a lot for me here and they really care about me. They want me to play my best."

Now, and forever, a member of the Auburn family, the senior has continued to demonstrate his tennis abilities and play a vital role on the team.

In singles competition, Tsyrenov ranks a preseason No. 7 in the Southeast Region by the Intercollegiate Tennis Association and continues to progress and help take the tennis program to a new level.

"Alexey has helped our team a tremendous amount," Shore stated. "I am expecting him to come out again this year and help to lead this team."

Tsyrenov's expectations for himself are the same — to win.

Always a competitor, the Russian native has taken the same mentality into each match.

"I want to win," he expressed. "I want to play as well as I can and win every match."

With the support of the Auburn family, Tsyrenov will take on a difficult spring season, matching up against several top-25 opponents and an incredibly tough SEC.

"Our schedule this season is extremely difficult," Shore said. "But Alexey has the experience and the leadership to succeed."

Away from the courts, Tsyrenov spends what little spare time he has relaxing from the exhausting life of a student-athlete. There are, however, other sports that occupy his time.

"I love to skate," Tsyrenov said. "I wish that I could go skate for an afternoon, but there is no hockey rink in Auburn. I also love to play soccer, but I wish that I had more time to do that."

As most of his time is filled with tennis and academics, Tsyrenov admits there are some things about his native Russia that he misses.

"I miss the Russian mentality," he stated. "The kind of humor that we have in Russia is totally different than the humor in America and that's one thing that I really miss."

Although the feeling of a hometown can never be replaced, the senior has found Auburn to be a fitting place for the time being.

"I love it here," he said. "I cannot imagine playing anywhere else where the people would care about me as much as they care here."

Coming from Chita, Russia to Auburn, Alabama, Tsyrenov has experienced a unique journey, and, in doing so, has found home.