

Sports

Four-time Colombian champion

Fernandez leads Aggie tennis team

By RICK STOLLE
Battalion Staff
In two years, Liliana Fernandez has gone from a small, scared Colombian tennis player who had been ready to quit after one week of practice to the number one spot on the women's tennis team at Texas A&M University.

Fernandez, a sophomore finance major, is currently listed as number one despite an attack of bursitis in her shoulder and back that left her out of the final two matches of the fall season.

She is recovering nicely with the help of the Texas A&M training room and medicine. Fernandez said she is taking three pills plus aspirin each day to combat the stiffness and soreness and so far, it is working.

The bursitis does not bother her at all on warm days, she said. And even on cold ones, she is only a little stiff and sore.

"I would take a hundred pills a day as long as I didn't have to get a shot," she said. "I don't like needles or doctors and the two always seem to go together."

Women's coach Jan Cannon said the bursitis attack may have actually been a blessing in disguise. It gave the coaches a chance to correct her serve, which had been fundamentally bad.

Cannon said she hated to change the serve before the bursitis attack because even though it was bad, it was working. But, afterwards, they were forced to change it.

"The toss on my serve was the big part of the problem," Fernandez said. "But I haven't had any trouble since I changed it."

She had been tossing the ball and hitting it behind her causing her to stretch and reach behind for each serve. Now, with the new toss, she hits the ball in front, Fernandez said.

In Cali, Colombia, (population approximately one million) Fernandez said she had only practiced on Fridays and Saturdays. Before a big tournament, however, she would practice three or four straight days to get ready.

"There was just no competition," she said. "We have four or five good tennis clubs in Colombia but to play, you had to belong."

She said she usually practiced for about an hour, seriously, with the tennis pro, and would then go and talk to her friends. Sometimes they would take off to get some ice cream or just go home.

"There was just nobody good to practice with," she said.

Besides, Fernandez added, soccer is more popular in Colombia.

The four-time Colombian national



Liliana Fernandez

champion said there were four athletes who would always meet in the finals of every national tournament. Sometimes she won, sometimes not.

Fernandez won the 14-and-under division once and came in second another time. In the 14-to-16-year-old division, she won the championship twice and then twice more for the 18-and-under division.

The Cali native said she goes home in the summer and at Christmas to see all her relatives. She said she plays in the summer tournaments

every year to stay in shape.

Her first week at Texas A&M last year, she said she thought she was going to collapse. The humidity, heat, hard work and running after practice every day nearly made her quit.

"It doesn't bother me as much now," she said, "except for the running. I still don't like to run."

"We didn't know what we were going to do with her," said head coach David Kent. "We had a big, Latin baby on our hands and we were ready to let her head back to South America."

"But now I'm certainly glad she persevered through it all."

Cannon agreed. "She absolutely will not give up," she said. She said Fernandez's perseverance is her best quality.

The coaches have a great deal of confidence in Fernandez. They said she has great determination, some of the best ground strokes around and is a team player that fits into their plans for the future.

Cannon said Fernandez will play number one until someone on the team beats her out.

"Liliana has a great, low shot," said Cannon. "Her opponents have to hit up at her and she just puts them away from the net."

Cannon said she had been worried

the layoff Fernandez got after her bout with bursitis had hurt her timing. But her timing is coming back, said Cannon, and she is also hitting the ball harder than ever.

Fernandez said she considers herself one of the top four players on the women's team. Any of the four could win the top spot on any given week, she said.

"Amy (Closs), Maylen (Hooten), Pam (Hill) and myself are the top four," she said. "But, with the talent the team has, anyone with a very good week could take the top spot."

Fernandez said the goals for the team will be tough but she believes they can be reached.

"We want to get into the women's top 20," she said, "and improve our play as a team."

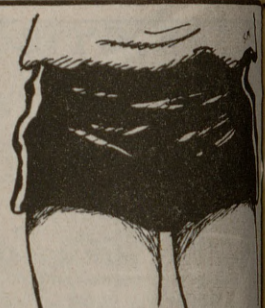
She said she knows everyone will improve, they have been working too hard not to.

The desire to be the best was evident following the workout Tuesday. Fernandez was one of the last to get done with practice and do her laps.

She asked coach Cannon if the running would really help her to become good and if it was worth it.

Cannon looked at Fernandez for a second and then said, "Yes, Liliana, but I don't want you to be good at the end of the year, I want you to be great."

Jock Shorts



Men's track

The men's track team will be in Oklahoma City Saturday for the Oklahoma Indoor Classic.

Last week, several members of the Aggie team participated in the Dallas Times-Herald Invitational in Dallas' Reunion Arena. In that meet, Randy Hall won the pole vault with fewer misses, leaping 17 feet.

Several personal and season bests were recorded at the meet also. Jimmy Howard jumped a career-high 7-4/4, and Leslie Kerr recorded a season best 47.99 in the 440-yard dash.

Mike Gaspie, competing in the 60-yard high hurdles, ran a team season high 7.31 race. In the mile relay, the foursome of Leslie and Larry Kerr, Floyd Furlow and Bart Daniel recorded a 3:15.68 race, also a season best.

Freshman Rod Richardson equalled his season best in the 60-yard dash at 6.18.

Hall and Howard will be in New York's Madison Square Garden tonight for the prestigious Milrose Games, but will join the Aggie Saturday in Oklahoma for the Indoor Classic.

Women's basketball

The Aggie Ladies won two and lost two to finish seventh in the SWC women's basketball tournament in Houston last week and will play Texas Tech at G. Rollie White Saturday.

Tipoff of that game comes at 12:15 p.m., as a prelude to the Aggie Tech TV game at 2:40.

The women opened tournament play with a 69-59 win over TCU with Kelley Sullivan leading the scoring with 22 points. Next they lost to Texas Tech, 62-51, as Sheryl Clark netted 10 for high honors. The Ladies then fell to Arkansas, 80-62, with Cathy Fuller scoring 19, and in the seventh place game Texas A&M beat Rice 69-63, as duRae G. scored 20. Clark had 12 steals during the four games.

The women now have a 6-17 season record.

Men's basketball

The Aggies, slowly recovering from a year-long drought, take to the C. Rollie White court again Saturday at 2:40 p.m. to take on the Texas Tech Red Raiders, 5-5.

The game will be regionally televised. At half-time of that game, candidates competing in the Miss Texas A&M Beauty Pageant will be introduced to the Aggie crowd.

Swimming

The Texas A&M men's and women's swimming teams will be in Lubbock this weekend to compete in a dual match against Texas Tech.

Last Saturday, the women's team drowned Southwest Texas State, San Marcos, 99-49, recording 12 first places; 10 in individual events and two in relays. Tracy Johnston won the 50-yard backstroke, 100-yard freestyle and the 50-yard butterfly to lead the Aggie women. She also joined Shelley Carbone, Cathy Cagen and Philis Burns to win the 400-yard medley.

Rifle team

The Aggie rifle team, after winning the Southwest Invitational in Paso last weekend, will travel to Fort Worth Saturday for a competition involving TCU, Texas A&M and UT-Arlington.

The Aggies totaled 2,201 points out of a possible 2,400 to win the Southwest Invitational meet.

Men's and women's tennis

The men's team will take on West Texas State at the Omar Smith Tennis Center today at 1:30 p.m.

On Saturday, the women will see their first action of the spring when Southwest Texas State rolls into town at 1:30 p.m. The men will see action once again, playing East Texas State.

McHan joins Saints; is 8th coach signed

NEW ORLEANS — Lamar McHan, the quarterbacks and receivers coach for the New Orleans Saints on coach Dick Nolan's staff, will be the receivers coach under Bum Phillips.

McHan, hired Wednesday, is the eighth coach signed by Phillips. A defensive secondary coach remains to be announced, a Saints spokesman said.

McHan's first coaching stint with the Saints was on John North's staff in 1974. He also was offensive coordinator at Northern Arizona and University of Texas-Arlington. The Lake Village, Ark., native is an all-America quarterback at University of Arkansas and a first draft choice of the Chicago Cardinals. He also played with the Cardinals and the Green Bay Packers.

Sambito signs 5-year pact

United Press International
HOUSTON — Houston Astros reliever pitcher Joe Sambito Thursday signed a five-year, \$3 million contract one day before an arbitration hearing was scheduled to decide the terms of a pact.

The signing placed all the Astros regulars under contract for 1981. Nine players on the 40-man roster remain unsigned, but none had the veteran status to seek arbitration.

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