

Experience Kowal's tennis partner

by Joe Tindel Jr.
Battalion Staff

The weather was abominable three years ago when a highly confident young tennis prospect arrived in College Station.

Ironically, the reason Ron Kowal wanted to play tennis at Texas A&M lie in the nature of the weather—more specifically, a warmer climate. And like almost everyone else, he liked the people here.

Kowal didn't figure tennis at Aggieland would let him down a few notches, though. In Naperville, Ill., he was the big man on the high school campus.

At Texas A&M, he was that new guy with the Midwestern accent.

"When I came here, I just got off winning the Illinois state men's singles title," said Kowal, now the captain of the Aggie tennis team. "I was ranked in the top 35 in the nation. I was the king of the hill back home as far as the first state champion out of our high school.

"I was real popular. I'm not being conceited, I mean (tennis) was just a popular thing, and I came down here with a head that probably couldn't fit through the coach's door."

Kowal was quickly humbled. His new surroundings were enough to stifle his first few attempts at showing the local fans he was for real, as the competition turned out to be a little tougher than he expected.

"I got down here and started

playing college ball and all of the sudden, you found me at the bottom of the barrel," Kowal said. "I mean it was a very big adjustment. The competition was so much tougher. The pressure they put on you from coming out of a place like that and then coming in to college tennis is so much more strenuous."

It was David Kent, the Aggies' head coach, who let Kowal know that his case of "freshmanitis" was a completely normal thing and that it would pass with experience.

As it turned out, Kent's treatment was the remedy for the ailment. Kowal finished his freshman season as half of one of the SWC's champion doubles teams.

"I established myself as a doubles player," Kowal said. "At that time, I had so much pressure on me in singles. I couldn't accomplish any part of my full game because I was so tight and so tense. So when I'd go on the doubles court, I had someone there to talk to and someone there to get all this pressure off me."

He returned for his sophomore year recognized as a doubles player but still lacking something in singles. In fact, it wasn't until last season that Kowal made a name for himself as a singles player, making it all the way to the Southwest Conference No. 6 singles finals last spring.

As Tom Judson's partner

during his sophomore year, Kowal might have found the season more profitable if he and Judson were playing horseshoes or darts. It was a season of near misses, as the duo fell in three sets to both the eventual NCAA champs and the runners-up. They missed the NCAA tournament "by a hair," Kowal said.

"We just played so much together that it just wasn't there any more," he said. "It was like getting a divorce, as the coach put it."

Last season, Kowal teamed with Greg Hill to form the duo that made it to the semifinals of the SWC tourney.

Being part of a doubles team perhaps goes along with Kowal's philosophy of the game. He's a team player, he said, and not so much an individualist. It's his team perspective that's helped him be the team captain for the past three years. Off the court, he uses his leadership abilities as a resident adviser in Cain Hall.

But he said he's still concerned about setting an example by improving his own game.

"As far as where I would like to be right now, I don't ever think I really punched through as well as I should in singles," Kowal said of his accomplish-

ments. "I think I'm trying to make a come-through now. I've had some good matches and played well, but I don't think I've been as consistent at winning as I would like to be."

"That's something that I'm trying to work on this year. I'd like to come through and make a strong performance—at least play at the level that I think I should be playing every time I go out onto the court."

Kowal and the Aggie men's tennis team have finished their fall competition, but still ahead are this weekend's NCAA indoor qualifying matches in Fort Worth.



Ron Kowal, a senior member of the Aggie men's tennis team, has emerged as one of the top players in the Southwest Conference during his Texas A&M career. Here, Kowal hits a backhand against an opponent during the 1981-82 season.

Mustangs' initial goal a victory from reality

United Press International
Lou Holtz and Bobby Collins began preparations Monday for a game a lot of people have been waiting for and F.A. Dry didn't want to see—his last at Texas Christian University.

TCU Chancellor William E. Tucker, saying his school was not a "win at any cost institution," fired Dry Monday, the second dismissal in as many years in the Southwest Conference.

"We do, however," said Tucker, "want to enjoy winning seasons and to become a consistently tough competitor."

Texas A&M was the last league school to fire a coach, dumping Tom Wilson and then coming up with more than \$1 million to hire Jackie Sherrill away from Pittsburgh.

Speculation as to Dry's successor centered around a number of coaches already in the area—chief among them former TCU quarterback Chuck Curtis, currently a successful coach at Cleburne High School. Dry's firing came as no surprise, since he had been under pressure to produce a meaningful improvement in the win column this year.

"Don't have any long faces," Dry told friends after meeting with Tucker early Monday. "You don't have to feel sorry for me." Dry has two years remaining on his contract and TCU is obligated to pay him for that period of time.

In six years at TCU, Dry made obvious gains in the competitive level of the Horned Frogs. Nevertheless, they have won only 12 games during Dry's tenure (three this year) with a final chance for No. 13 coming next Saturday in College Station against Texas A&M.

Collins, meanwhile, has a chance for 12 victories in his first season at SMU—taking a 10-0 record into next Saturday's attraction with Holtz' Arkansas

Razorbacks. The game will be televised by ABC-TV from Texas Stadium beginning at 2:50 p.m.

"This one is for the outright Southwest Conference championship," said Collins, "and that was our goal from the start. And with that goes the Cotton Bowl trip and that is something our players felt they were deprived of last year (being ineligible for the bowl game because of NCAA probation).

"But we know the only way we can win a national championship is to win this game and the next one. That means this game is very important. But in the context of the national championship, all the other ones were important, too."

Collins was facing the task of calming his players after their frantic 34-27 win over Texas Tech. That victory, SMU's 14th

in a row, came about only because of a trick kickoff return after Tech had tied the game with 17 seconds remaining.

The SMU coach admitted Monday that things got out of hand on the SMU bench after Bobby Leach had run 91 yards for the winning score.

"I started screaming for people to get off the field (after the score)," said Collins, "and I realized that there were 45,000 people in the stands, 200 football players, cheerleaders, band members and an awful lot of other people around."

"And not one soul was paying any attention to me."

"I was trying to get the extra-point team on the field and I turned around and asked one of my assistants where they were. He said, 'coach, they are in the end zone.'"

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