

Sports

O'Donovan got help from friends in deciding to play tennis here

By Cray Pixley
Sports Writer



Shaun O'Donovan

Shaun O'Donovan is a long way from home.

For O'Donovan, the No. 2 seed on the A&M men's tennis team and one half of A&M's No. 1 doubles team with Steve Kennedy, home is Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

O'Donovan's journey from South Africa to College Station began in the spring of 1987 after he received an A&M scholarship.

"I was looking for a university that could offer a good scholarship, and I had a friend on the A&M team who told the coach how I played," O'Donovan says.

That friend was fellow South African Brent Haygarth who left the A&M men's team last year to pursue a professional career.

"When coaches recruit foreign players, they don't know how well the athletes perform so it helped to have Brent tell the coach about me," O'Donovan says. "I guess he (Haygarth) gave a good report."

O'Donovan left South Africa to enhance his tennis and get an education.

"After high school in South Africa there isn't much to do toward tennis except turn professional and that's hard to do without a lot of contacts and money," he says.

He says that tennis is important but that an education also is essential in case his tennis career turns sour. O'Donovan is a general studies major, but plans to change to building construction.

O'Donovan's tennis career began when he was 6 years old after his older sister sought his assistance in her tennis career.

"My sister was interested in tennis and she needed someone to hit the ball to," he explains. "We had a court in our backyard, and I would hit the balls back to her."

In addition to tennis, O'Donovan played soccer.

"In the eighth grade I had the chance to represent state in tennis and my coach made me choose between tennis and soccer," he says.

and patience," he says laughingly. "My weakness is definitely concentration."

"Sometimes during a match I start thinking about what I'll do after the match or what people are doing in the stands."

O'Donovan says he gets back on track by taking longer in between points.

In the patience department, O'Donovan says he tries to hit too many winners.

"I try to hit winners when I should just sit back and play the point," he says.

O'Donovan's self-stated weaknesses don't seem to have injured his doubles play. Earlier this spring, he and partner, Kennedy, leaped onto the Intercollegiate Tennis Coaches Association rankings at the No. 25 position.

"I think it's great that we weren't even in the rankings and then made it in so high," he says.

The O'Donovan-Kennedy team has been together for a year now. O'Donovan says their success stems from being very familiar with each other's games.

O'Donovan says if he and Kennedy continue to play well they might play in the NCAA tournament. He looks further down the road to doing well in the NCAA to gain American Tennis Players Association points and perhaps sponsors. Both ATP points and sponsors are essential to players' professional careers.

"Even if we didn't play well in the NCAA this year, we do have two years left," O'Donovan says.

Although he is looking toward a professional tennis career, O'Donovan says he will finish college.

"I want to get an education and be the best that I can be in tennis," he explains.

Later this year O'Donovan will work on A&M tennis camps and return for a visit to South Africa with doubles partner Kennedy in tow.

For the present, O'Donovan will remain a strong No. 2 seed in the singles behind Dean Johnson.

Big 'Mac' will be back on tennis circuit soon

Those John McEnroe rumors are flying around again.

Just when you thought he was back for good, injuries sideline him.

Those injuries sparked rumors that the Mac was on his way off the circuit and into the television commentary box where all old tennis stars go.

But no, it's not true! I'm happy to say that McEnroe is not headed to the pasture.

McEnroe, who has suffered a back problem for quite awhile, hasn't given up his racquet but he is recuperating.

His recuperation layoff is a good choice on his part because he is not playing in top form.

Since taking a break from the circuit, McEnroe has yet to blaze his way through to a grand slam tournament victory and is clearly not the same player who battled with Borg at Wimbledon a few years back.

His recent disappearance from tennis stems from an embarrassing loss to the Soviet player, Andrei Chesnokov, at the Nike International in Japan.

The Nike International was only an exhibition match and somewhat of a trauma for McEnroe.

McEnroe, who represents Nike, turned in a dismal performance against Chesnokov in Japan, and was clearly unhappy about it.

After the match he admitted that he would not have played that exhibition if it were not for his commitment to Nike.

This performance helps fuel the rumors that McEnroe, at 29, is a faded star.

There are those who say McEnroe should never have returned to the circuit because it had been so nice and tranquil without him.

Boring. McEnroe is not the pillar of sportsmanship, but during a five-set match he isn't boring to watch either.

People always point fingers at McEnroe and say, "why can't you be more calm and polite like the Swedish players?"

Sure, I applaud the Swedes with their brilliant play but I do suffer through their faultless

court manners. There is rarely any spice to Joakim Nystrom or Mats Wilander's play. Their demeanor is about as chipper and controversial as an icicle.

Pat Cash is about the most flamboyantly argumentative player these days, and he is beginning to inherit the bad boy crown in McEnroe's absence.

But let me tell you, McEnroe is not just sitting back eating Oreos during his break. Through Nike he is becoming a tennis fashion trend setter.

Yes, McEnroe has brought the denim shorts to the tennis circuit — a move that probably won't make him anymore popular. Oh well.

Don't fear, McEnroe will be back on the court soon to play the French Open, Wimbledon and the U.S. Open.

McEnroe is not dead and buried.

That mistake was made two years ago in the form of Jimmy Connors, the current pillar of tennis.

The old man of tennis at age 35 has since regained past glory in several grand slam tournaments.

Don't discard McEnroe to early — he definitely has not played his last match.



Cray Pixley
Sports viewpoint

Hostess applications due April 1

Applications for the 1988 Aggie Hostesses will be available from March 26 until April 1 on the ninth floor of Rudder Tower.

The Aggie Hostesses serve as official representatives of Texas A&M. They help recruit prospective student athletes for the football team, act as press box hostesses during

football games and perform various community services.

Applicants must have a minimum 2.5 grade point average and be classified as a junior or senior next fall.

"The Aggie Hostesses are a true expression of the 12th Man and of what it means to be a Fightin' Texas Aggie," Jackie Sherrill, A&M athletic director and head football coach,

said. "These young ladies donate much of their time and effort toward what we are trying to accomplish in our program."

A mandatory informational meeting will be March 30 at 7 p.m. in room 225 of the Memorial Student Center.

Applications are due by 12 p.m. April 1.

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