O'Donovan's sparkling year making A&M netters shine

By NADJA SABAWALA
Of The Battalion Staff

If senior Shaun O'Donovan dominates the Texas A&M tennis team's headlines in 1990, it's his own fault.

The 5'8" righthander from Pietermaritzburg, South Africa is undefeated in singles play in 1990, and by the looks of it, will remain undefeated for some time to come.

"He's been an unbelievable surprise this year," A&M coach David Kent said. "He's got a good feel for the ball and I'm proud of him."

O'Donovan's 7-0 record this spring reflects his determination to be No. 1.

He said he realizes 1990 is his last year, and he wants to make it his best. He has compiled a 62-49 singles record at A&M in his first three years.

"I want to do well this year because it's my last chance," O'Donovan said. "I guess before, I didn't have the urgency ... now I know this is it."

> "If I hit a rough spot, I keep concentrating ... I try not to get mad fast. I think first."
>
> — Shaun O'Donovan, tennis player

Last spring, O'Donovan recorded a 10-11 singles and 5-9 doubles season, and in the fall improved to 7-6 and 7-3.

But this spring has been a good season for O'Donovan.

Preseason rankings predicted him to alternate with senior Gustavo Espinosa for A&M's No. 1 singles position.

But with O'Donovan's record, he's got that all but nailed down.

O'Donovan said he felt confident in his play so far this year.

"Before the season I was hoping I'd be good because I didn't have a good year last year," he said.

"I guess I'm doing something right."

Frustration was one of O'Donovan's problems last year. He said it often would break his intensity and his concentration.

This year, he is trying to stay cool.

"I now go into matches relaxed and not overconfident," O'Donovan said. "I've got to get the rhythm going.

"If I hit a rough spot, I keep concentrating ... I try not to get mad fast. I think first."

And think he does. Kent said O'Donovan is an outstanding player in both singles and doubles, always looking for the win.

"He's a good team person," Kent said. "He's no prima donna."

Although O'Donovan has an exceptional singles record, he said he prefers playing doubles.

He and his partner, sophomore Doug Brown, form the No. 2 A&M doubles team.

"Doubles is a quicker game," he said. "You're part of a team, and I like winning as part of a team."

O'Donovan may like winning as part of a team, but he knows someday there may be a loss he commits by himself.

"I do expect a loss, and when it comes, I'll just take it and go on," he said. "I won't let it slow me down."

However, it may take a lot to slow O'Donovan down in 1990. A&M played Michigan in the Indiana Team Tourney in mid-February, and he defeated David Kass, the No. 17 men's player in the country.

"It was definitely my hardest match, but it was indoor and there's less things to concentrate on," O'Donovan said.

O'Donovan was counted on heavily in preseason hopes for the A&M tennis team. Kent said he thought Espinosa, ranked 43rd in the nation before the season, might contend for All-American honors this spring.

But so far, it's been all O'Donovan.

He said he prefers indoor matches because there is neither wind nor sun, and it's easier to concentrate on the match he's playing.

O'Donovan said he is excited about the future — both his and the team's.

"My record now is really helping things," he said. "I want the team to get a good record and I really want to help the team out."

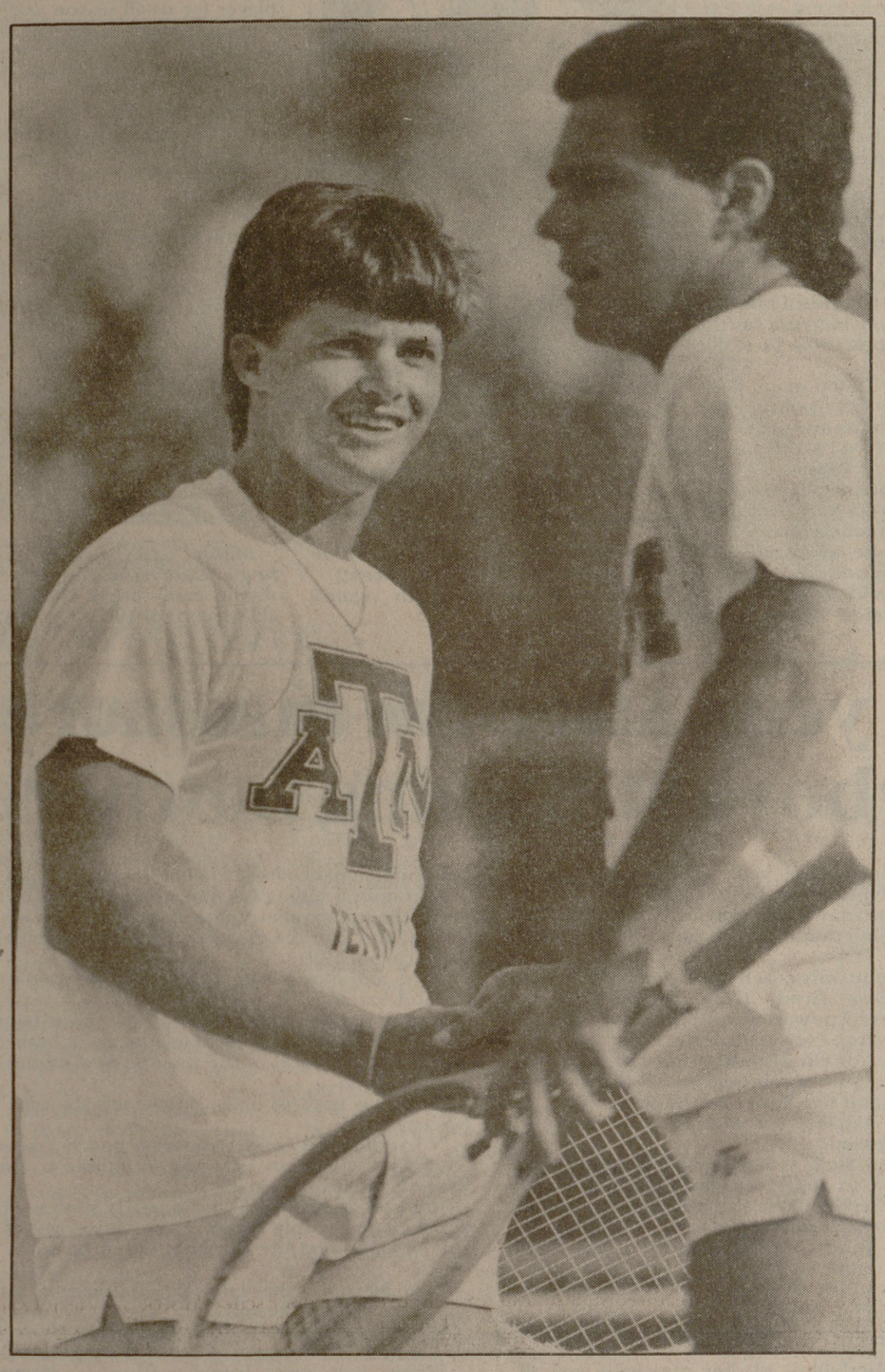
A&M has jumped out to a 5-1 dual match record in 1990 — largely in part to O'Donovan's success.

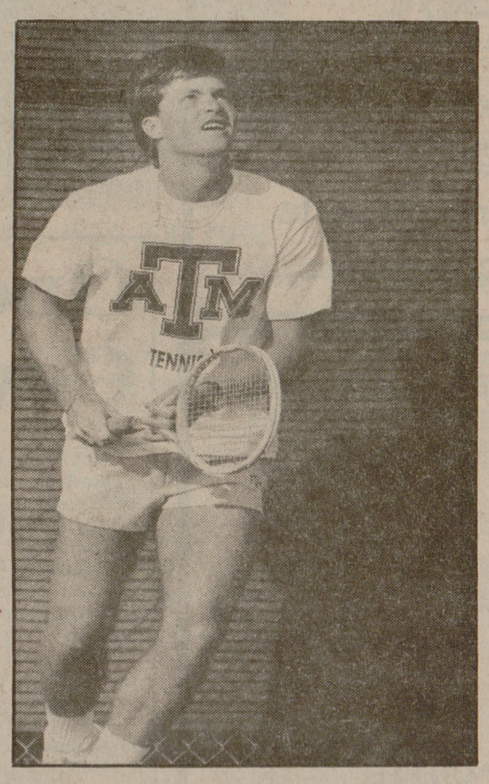
Last Friday, the Aggies upset No. 25 Trinity, 5-3. O'Donovan swept Greg Tournant, the nation's 33rd-ranked player, in straight sets.

His most recent victory was in Monday's dual match with Northeast Lousiana at Omar Smith Tennis Center.

He swept NEL's Bryan Miltz, 6-4, 6-4 in singles.

In doubles, he and Brown defeated Miltz and Mike May, 6-3, 6-3.





Photos by Fredrick D. Joe

Senior Shaun O'Donovan (above) leads a talented Texas A&M men's tennis team in 1990, both in singles and in doubles with Doug Brown (l).

O'Donovan said he pulled a muscle in his abdomen Monday during his singles match, but it was hard to tell by his powerful performance later in doubles.

"As long as I keep my concentration and stay relaxed, I'll keep my intensity up," he said.

Kent agreed.

"He really is great to watch," he said. "People ought to come out and see him play."

But until that happens, O'Donovan will remain the Aggies' best kept secret.

A&M improves to 5-1 after win over NE Louisiana

By NADJA SABAWALA
Of The Battalion Staff

Sophomore netter Doug Brown fought off three match points for a win to help the Texas A&M men's tennis team beat the Northeast Lousiana Indians Monday afternoon, 5-4 at Omar Smith Tennis Center.

After a 3-3 tie in singles play, A&M went on to win two-of-three doubles matches to clinch the victory.

"Brown saved our tail, he made a phenomenal comeback," A&M coach David Kent said. Kent compared Brown's play to former Aggie and four-time Southwest Conference champion Kimmo Alkio.

A&M's No. 1 player, senior Shaun O'Donovan, remained undefeated as he beat Northeast Lousiana's Bryan Miltz in straight sets, 6-1, 6-4.

"(O'Donovan) is the most exciting player our tennis team has had in years," Kent said.

In other singles action, junior Matt Zisette defeated Eric Grace 6-4, 7-6 and Brown beat Mike Bryan 2-6, 7-5, 6-4.

Junior Steve Kennedy lost to Mike May, 6-4, 7-6 and freshman Scott Phillips was beaten by Fredrik Thelander, 6-7, 6-3, 6-1.

Senior Gustavo Espinosa, A&M's No. 2 player, lost to Riva DaSilva, 6-4, 6-4 in singles and doubled with Zisette, losing to DaSilva and Bryan, 7-6, 7-6.

Brown and O'Donovan swept May and Miltz 6-3, 6-3 and Kennedy combined with Castillo to defeat Peterson and Grace 6-2, 6-3.

Kent said he was pleased with Kennedy and Castillo's performance in doubles play. He said the competition with Northeast Lousiana was a "real quality win," and attributed it to a good team effort.

"This is the way we've got to win, with everyone contributing," Kent said.

Last Friday, the Aggie netters defeated No. 25 Trinity, 5-3, again relying on doubles competition for the win. After a 3-3 tie, sophomore Blake Barsalou and Espinosa defeated Maurico Silva and Keith McKay, 3-6, 6-4, 7-5, while Phillips and Castillo beat Rich Beuin and Anders Eriksson in straight sets, 6-0, 6-2.

Brown and O'Donovan's doubles match against Anthony Roy and Will Forsyth was called at 4-6, 4-3 because of the completion of the dual match.

"This was a great win over a ranked team," Kent said. "It was what college tennis is all about.

"This team has great depth and that will help us down the road as it did today."

A&M improved its dual match record to 5-1, and will go on to face Harvard in the first round of the Corpus Christi Team Tourney, March 1-4 in Corpus Christi.

"We've been playing some class tennis this year," Kent said. "We've got some really outstanding guys."

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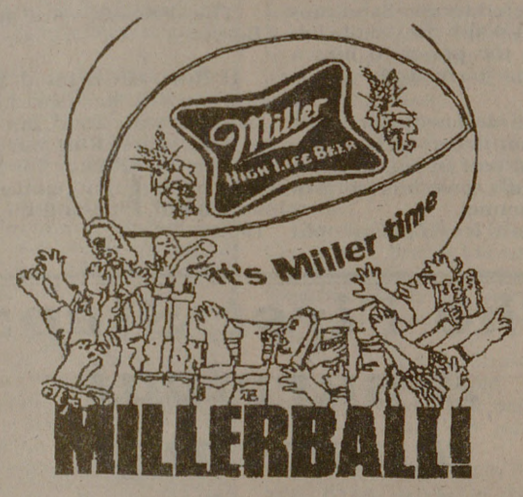

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