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# A Pair of Aces



Senior Rooks relies on parental support to excel in tennis

BY KATIE MISH  
Staff writer

Vanessa Rooks swears she could make it through a tennis match without a little help from her best supporter, her mother. Rooks, a senior and captain of Texas A&M Women's Tennis, said she calls her mom before every match for a pep talk. "I'm a big mama's girl," Rooks said. "I talk to my mom before matches, every single time. She tells me about everything that's going on, she tells me she loves me, to concentrate and at good. I have to talk to my mom before a match or I can't play." Rooks started playing tennis at the age of five because of her sister. She would go to practice with her sister, but her sister stopped playing in high school. Rooks credits her with inspiring her to keep playing. "He has been there for me since I was born," she said. "I was like third in the nation when I was playing

with him, so he's definitely had a big influence on me."

Rooks transferred to Texas A&M from the University of Florida, after visiting the campus on a recruiting trip. Rooks said she chose to transfer because of the people and atmosphere and because of the girls on the team.

**"I think I owe it to myself to try and make it."**

**Vanessa Rooks  
Senior tennis player**

She said she also chose Texas A&M because it's a little closer to her hometown and family in San Diego, Calif. "I didn't get along very well at the other school," she said. "I was too far away from home and it was a big change for me. I cried all the time because I missed my mom so much, and now I'm a little closer to her." Rooks said she thinks it's her job as captain of the team to keep the peace

and be someone her fellow teammates can come a talk to about their problems. She said she works well with the coaches, a big part of her responsibility as captain of the team.

"The coaches tell me kind of what they're looking for, and I'll give it to them," Rooks said. "I'm just kind of the person they all come to." Monica Robledo, another senior on the Aggie team, said Rooks is a good leader for the team, and definitely someone the team can look to as an example.

"She's always trying to support the team," Robledo said. "She's also a competitor. Every time she goes out there she gives it everything she has, and I think that's someone everyone can look up to." Rooks said she wants to finish off the season strong and not give up. She was sick a couple of weeks ago with the flu, strep throat and intestinal problems, but said she feels even stronger now and that it has not affected her game.

Rooks said she wants to keep playing after college, and will try for awhile before she goes out and gets a job.

"I think I owe it to myself to try and make it," Rooks said.

Monica Robledo took circuitous route to play at A&M

BY COLBY MARTIN  
Staff writer

Monica Robledo has come a long way to become Big 12 player of the month for March. The senior on the Texas A&M women's tennis team is a native of Peru.

"I did not even know that I had been selected as player of the month until I read it in *The Battalion*. I was very excited to get an honor like that," Monica said.

How does someone from Peru end up at Texas A&M?

"I was playing in an amateur tournament in Miami when I was sixteen and Coach (Bob) Kleinecke saw me play," Robledo said. "I really fell in love with the traditions and spirit of the school."

Monica saw Texas A&M as an opportunity to play in some good tournaments and prepare herself for a career on the professional circuit. Four years later she is at a different place in her life.

"I decided that my education was the most important thing and right now I do not really want to play past college," Monica said.

After graduation she plans to go

back to school for her master's in finance. She also has an open invitation from Coach Kleinecke to stay on as a graduate assistant, but she does not know if she will accept.

"She has really been playing well lately, and has been a big boost for our team," said fellow

**I really fell in love with the traditions and spirit of the school."**

**Monica Robledo  
Senior tennis player**

senior Vanessa Rooks.

With a career 90 wins in singles play, she is only two away from breaking the Texas A&M record held by Nancy Dingwall and Lynn Staley.

"I do not feel like I have been playing my absolute best tennis, but I have been playing well enough to win. I think experience has a lot to do with that," Robledo said.

The senior from Lima, Peru has a 9-0 record in league play.

"Monica brings a tremendous amount of leadership to our team. She is a great competitor and she always works hard in practice and in matches," said Rooks.

Along with Vanessa they make up the senior tandem on a young team. Being on a young squad can be difficult because it usually means a transition period for any sports team. This year, however, that has not exactly been the case. The team has really followed the leadership of Monica, and they are right there at the top of the Big 12 standings.

"It is so important to try my hardest at all that I do, in order to set a good example for the rest of the team," said Robledo.

As we all know, college very rarely goes the way we expect it to. We usually see ourselves being very different than we actually turn out. In Monica Robledo's case this is true. She may not be the next Monica Seles. That is fine by her. She has realized that tennis is a means to an end, and she will cherish it for what it is and what it will be.

## All-Madden

Shuon Madden passes up pro ranks to declare himself eligible for college play

BY MICHAEL TAGLIANTI  
Staff writer

Life does not always go the way you plan it. Freshman tennis player Shuon Madden is a perfect example of how life is full of surprises.

As a young boy in Venezuela, Madden dreamed of becoming a professional tennis player. One day he was playing with his childhood friend Rafael de Mesa, when A&M Tennis Coach Tim Cass showed up to recruit de Mesa. Cass saw Madden play and was impressed enough with him to recruit him along with de Mesa.

"Rafael and I used to train together and through him Coach Cass saw me play and practice and he dropped off a media guide and told me if I was interested to give him a call," Madden said.

At the time, Madden did not think he would ever end up in college.

"My main goal my sophomore and junior year of high school was to not even go to college at all," Madden said. "I was planning on going pro after high school. Then I realized it took a lot both financially and tennis-wise. Coach Cass kept insisting that I should try college, that it is a good experience that would help me."

Madden eventually decided to go to A&M, but had trouble with the NCAA Clearinghouse regarding his eligibility.

By the time the Clearinghouse declared him eligible, fall classes were already well under-

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**Scott Treibly  
Assistant Tennis Coach**

way, Madden enrolled and started attending classes in the spring. He has been an instant success on the tennis court.

Madden has compiled an undefeated record of 10-0 and last week was named the Big 12 player of the week in men's tennis.

Assistant Tennis Coach Scott Treibly said Madden puts a lot of pressure on his opponents through mistake free tennis.

"He competes so well. He puts so much pressure on his opponents and he doesn't give away free points. His forehand is good and it's getting better and better, and he has great quickness and speed," Treibly said.

Madden said it has been an easy transition to A&M and college life, which he attributes to the athletic support staff.

"I like A&M. It is pretty cool. The (athletic support) staff helps you a lot."

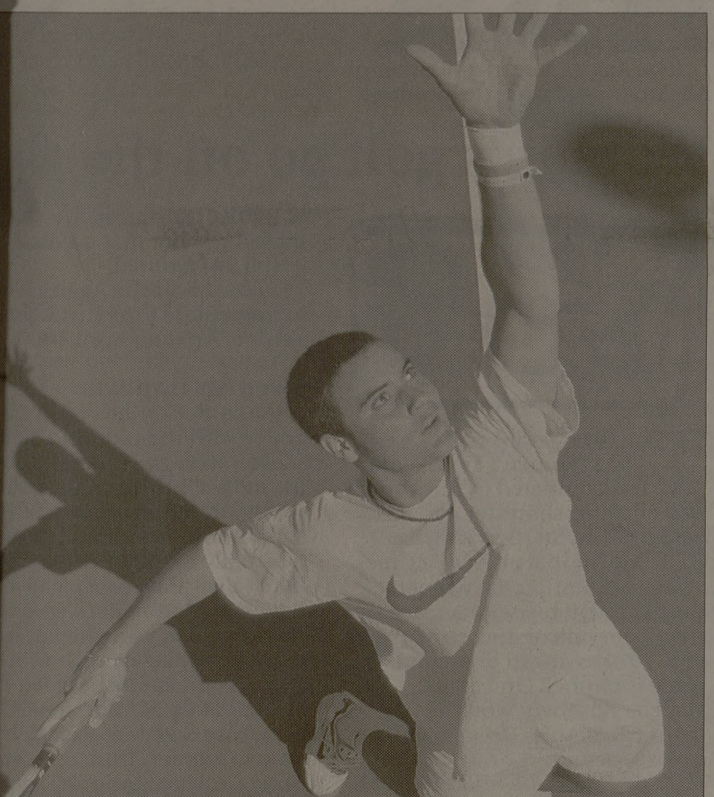
Treibly attributes the ease of Madden's transition to the fact that he is part of a large freshman class.

"We've got a young bunch of guys and they all live together in Cain Hall, and I think that really helps. He's living with Raphael (de Mesa) and they've been friends through the years so it's been an easy transition," Treibly said.

Treibly said that despite his youth, Madden is already an asset to the team and that his potential is endless.

"He's been a great asset, a great leader. I see the sky as the limit for him in his career here and professionally," Treibly said.

Madden is obviously a major part of this young but extremely successful tennis team. He is definitely a player to watch as he continues in his career bound for success.



RYAN ROGERS/THE BATTALION

Shuon Madden passed up a professional career to play for Texas A&M.

## Freshman Fire

Rafael de Mesa uses his work ethic to conquer tough competition

BY AL LAZARUS  
Staff writer

When people who know Texas A&M Men's Tennis Team freshman Rafael de Mesa are asked to describe him, their descriptions always seem to include the words "confident" and "hard-working."

It is probably no coincidence that when asked what it takes to be successful, de Mesa uses the same words.

"For me to win, I have to work hard, and that leads to me being confident on the court, and my opponent sees that," said de Mesa, who plays in the No. 1 singles position for the Aggies.

Coming out of high school in Key Biscayne, Florida, de Mesa was the third-ranked junior in the nation in theUSTA's 18's division. De Mesa is now ranked No. 38 in the Rolex Collegiate Rankings. He feels that other players are always gunning to knock off such a highly-ranked competitor.

"There's always pressure with (being ranked highly), because if I'm playing someone ranked behind me, then they're always looking to beat me because I'm going to be a good win for them," de Mesa said.

Born in Madrid, Spain, de Mesa moved to Miami when he was four, and eventually ended up in nearby Key Bis-

cayne. He took up tennis at the age of seven, and soon flourished in the junior tennis hotbed of South Florida.

When Aggie Coach Tim Cass came calling last year, de Mesa admits he was

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**Scott Treibly  
Assistant Tennis Coach**

a bit unfamiliar with A&M.

"I hadn't really heard of the school, but I visited it and really liked it," de Mesa said. "They were building a new tennis stadium and had a lot of good players coming in, so overall it seemed like a good situation."

Assistant Coach Scott Treibly, who joined the Aggies last fall, speaks highly of de Mesa.

"He sticks to his business, he knows his goals and has a vision to achieve them," Treibly said. "He's been great for the team, they really learn from his work ethic."

De Mesa said his favorite thing

about playing college tennis is the team atmosphere.

"I enjoy the team, we are all great friends, even though we haven't known each other too long," he said. "When I watch (my teammates) play, now I know how my parents feel when they watch me, because I want them to win so badly."

De Mesa already has several impressive accomplishments in his young college career. In the Fall, he won the consolation bracket at the ITA Clay Courts, a leg of the collegiate grand slam. On Tuesday, playing as the lone amateur in the River Oaks International Tennis Tournament, a professional tournament in Houston, de Mesa defeated Wade Maguire, who holds a world ATP ranking of 214.

Cody Hubbell, a freshman on the men's team and de Mesa's doubles partner, watched de Mesa play in Houston on Tuesday, and afterward expressed his amazement in de Mesa's skills.

"The way he played (in Houston) was unbelievable," Hubbell said. "He can compete with anyone, so watch out, world."



RYAN ROGERS/THE BATTALION

Freshman Rafael de Mesa has found it difficult defending his No. 38 ranking. de Mesa defeated 214-world-ranked Wade McGuire in a recent tournament