

# 2000-01 University of Florida

Last year's University of Florida women's tennis team reached the semifinals of the NCAA Championships for the 13th time in the last 14 seasons. The Gators won their 10th Southeastern Conference Tournament title in the 12-year history of the event. The team finished with a No. 3 ranking in the final ITA listings. Florida lost only two regular season matches and ended the year with a 25-3 record. But last year was considered a "down" year by Florida standards!

A "down" year? Yes.

During the 16-year reign under head coach Andy Brandi, the Florida women's tennis team has flourished as one of the nation's elite programs. Every freshman who has played four

the Gator's lineup remained intact. Four returning starters welcome a trio of exceptionally talented freshmen to the court in their quest for another NCAA title.

Senior **Whitney Laiho**, who has played the No. 1 singles position each of the last two years, contemplated skipping her final season to play on the professional tour. After sitting down with family and friends, Laiho decided to return for her fourth year of collegiate competition. She enters her senior season with an 80-19 singles record and a 43-13 doubles mark.

"Whitney returns as one of the top five players in the country," Brandi said. "She had some injuries during the Fall and didn't play a lot, but we're hoping for big things from her in the Spring."

Laiho did not play a singles tournament during the Fall of 2000, but in the lone doubles event she entered she paired with junior **Jessica Lehnhoff**. The duo walked off the court as co-champions of the season-ending ITA South Regional Championships after inclement weather cancelled the finals.

Lehnhoff earned All-America honors in singles and doubles last season and appears to have picked up right where



Senior **Stephanie Hazlett** was 14-0 in dual match doubles action last season.

## 2000-01 Intercollegiate Tennis Association Preseason Rankings

	Sept.	Dec.
<b>TEAM</b>	n/a	T-2
Bengtsson	—	—
Dawaf	75	34
Hazlett	32	#
Laiho	5	#
Lehnhoff	16	17
Scaringe	T-92	T-59
Soukup#	—	—
Laiho/Lehnhoff	6	14
Hazlett/Scaringe	35	—

#insufficient data to be ranked



Senior **Whitney Laiho** returns as one of the top singles players in the country.

seasons has competed in the national championship match during their career.

With the success that Brandi's troops have come to expect, anything short of winning the NCAA title is a disappointment.

The 2000-01 Gators think they will be in the hunt again. They felt the sting of last season's disappointments and are ready to chomp any team that gets in their path this year.

"We're loaded with talent this season," exclaimed Brandi. "There really is not a lot of difference between the top four, possibly top five, players on our team. We have so much depth. The bottom of our lineup is going to be scary. It will be interesting to see who is going to play which position in the lineup. It's been a long time since we've had four players who could legitimately play the No. 1 position."

Florida graduated two seniors from last year's team but the top three singles positions and No. 1 doubles team in



Junior **Jessica Lehnhoff** earned singles and doubles All-America honors last year.

# Women's Tennis Season Outlook

she left off last year. Lehnhoff blazed through the Fall with an incredible 16-1 singles record and three tournament titles, including the ITA South Regional Championship crown where she again settled for co-champion status because of the weather.

"I don't think there were many players in the country who had a better Fall season than Jessica," Brandi said. "She is fit, she is healthy and she is showing great maturity on the court this year."

Senior **Stephanie Hazlett** also battled the injury bug during the fall of 2000 and did not compete in any singles tournaments. However, Hazlett did team with sophomore **Julia Scaringe** in two doubles events and reached the finals in one and the semifinals in the other. Hazlett sports an 86-16 singles record and a 58-12 doubles record entering her final semester of play.

"Stephanie battles so hard on the court," Brandi said. "She's relentless from the baseline. Stephanie has been a part of a national championship team and a team that lost in the NCAA finals. She knows the feeling of both but she

STEPHEN MORTON



**Freshman Lindsay Dawaf reached the semifinals of the ITA South Regional Championships.**

up a lot of experience last year and is going to give us tremendous depth this season."

The three new faces suiting up for the Gators this season are **Annika Bengtsson, Lindsay Dawaf and Aneta Soukup**.

Bengtsson, a 5-foot-8 right-hander from Helsingborg, Sweden, competed in four singles tournaments during the Fall and showed that she will be a valuable contributor this season for the Gators. In her collegiate singles debut, Bengtsson reached the quarterfinals where she fell to UF teammate and eventual-champion Jessica Lehnhoff.

"Annika faced some of the top players from other teams during the Fall and had great results," Brandi said.

Dawaf, a 5-foot-6 baseliner from Olney, Md., provided a glimpse of the depth Florida will have this Spring. She posted an impressive 7-3 record, with all three losses coming against nationally ranked players. Dawaf reached the semifinals of the ITA South Regional Championships before losing to Gator teammate Jessica Lehnhoff.

"Lindsay is a competitor on the court," Brandi said. "She fights and battles and wears her opponents down."

Soukup didn't enroll until January and her addition to the squad gave the Gators an instant boost the moment she stepped on campus. Among her accomplishments is the bronze medal she won at the 1999 Pan American Games representing Canada.

"Aneta is a 21-year-old freshman and is going to bring maturity and stability to the team," Brandi said. "She is an extremely experienced player. She takes our team to another level."

On paper, the Gators feature one of

the most potent line-ups in the country. Florida was ranked tied-for-No. 2 in the preseason listings and this was prior to the addition of Soukup.

"We've got a good team, we really do. There are still some questions that we won't be able to answer immediately," Brandi said. "We need to find out how strong Whitney and Stephanie come back from their injuries. But the addition of Annika, Lindsay and Aneta into our lineup has boosted our level. Last year



STEPHEN MORTON

**Freshman Annika Bengtsson reached the quarterfinals in her first collegiate singles tournament.**



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**Freshman Aneta Soukup won a bronze medal at the 1999 PanAm Games.**

we were a little young and a little immature. This year we have a lot more experience."

That experience is a key reason Florida is poised and confident entering the 2000-01 dual match season. The expectations are high once again, and the Gators wouldn't want it any other way.



STEPHEN MORTON

**Sophomore Julia Scaringe recorded a combined 50 singles and doubles wins as a rookie.**

only enjoyed one of those. Stephanie is one of our more vocal leaders and her experience will be a key to our success this season."

Scaringe had a very solid freshman campaign, posting a 30-11 record on the singles court and a 20-6 doubles mark. Like Lehnhoff, Scaringe had an impressive Fall season which included two wins over nationally ranked opponents.

"Julia continues to get better and her improvement will surprise people this season," Brandi said. "She picked