Josh Page From ABAC Wins National Tennis Championship

TIFTON--Fighting off excruciating pain from a blister on his foot, Josh Page from Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College won the national championship at number one singles on Friday morning at the National Junior College Athletic Association men's tennis tournament in Plano, Texas.

Page, an ABAC freshman from the United Kingdom, won 6-4,7-6 over Harry Busby from Cowley (Kans.) College for the first national title at number one singles for the Stallions since Richard Evans led ABAC to the national championship in 1999.

"I feel really good," Page said minutes after the match. "This is the best year of tennis I have had in my entire life. With the pressure I felt on the court today, I can't imagine what it must be like in a Grand Slam match."

After winning the first set, Page fell behind 4-1 in the second and had to take an injury timeout for a blister on his left foot.

"I felt like he was in command of the match, and I was already thinking about the third set," Page said. "Then I kind of loosened up, and he got a little tight. Finally at the end, I hit
three really good backhands, and he returned every one of them. I'm thinking he is just not going
to go away."

On the final point, Page did indeed smash three backhand shots before turning the
momentum his way with four forehand shots including a long shot deep in the right corner,
which proved to be the key that unlocked a national championship.

"It was such a good feeling when his return went into the net," Page said.

The ABAC team immediately rushed onto the court and surrounded their new national titlist. First year head coach Dale White couldn't have been happier.

"Josh has been playing fantastic all week," White said. "He has handled the emotional and physical grind really well. It's so great to see someone from ABAC win a title. He had to work hard all year and improve in some areas. And he did."

The Stallions finished fifth in the team standings by playing what White called "our best tennis all season out here this week. I am really proud of these guys and the way they responded."

Page, named the International Tennis Association Region IV Rookie of the Year earlier in the week, knocked off Spartak Rahachou from Johnson County (Kans.) 3-6, 6-3, 6-2 in Thursday's national semifinal. Page was the Most Valuable Player of the NJCAA Region XVII tournament when the Stallions claimed that state title in April at the Red Hill Athletic Center on the ABAC campus. Page also won the ITA Small College Regional championship last October. Now he has a chance to do what only one other player in the history of the much heralded ABAC men's tennis program has done, win back-to-back national titles. ABAC Athletics Hall of Fame selection Jean Francoise Lagloire did it in 1989-90.

"That would be the next step wouldn't it?" Page said.
The ABAC women's team, also under the direction of White, finished 12th in last week's national tournament in Tyler, Texas. The Fillies wound up second in the NJCAA Region XVII tournament.

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