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Women’s Tennis Team of 1999 to Enter ABAC Hall of Fame

TIFTON—Led by the stellar play of national champion Milena Stanoytcheva, the 1999 women’s tennis team at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College blazed its way into the record books with a state title and a second place finish in the national tournament.
Alan Kramer, the coach of that team and now the ABAC Athletics Director, called them “the most talented women’s tennis team in the history of ABAC.” For their accomplishments, the 1999 edition of Fillies’ tennis will be inducted into the 2015 ABAC Athletics Hall of Fame.

Tickets are now available at a cost of $30 per person for the induction dinner in Gressette Gym at 6 p.m. on April 10. The dinner is a part of the ABAC Homecoming Week activities. Athletics Director Alan Kramer said those who wish to attend the dinner can contact the Office of College Advancement at (229) 391-4895 for tickets. Tickets will only be sold in advance.

The Hall of Fame event will be a part of the alumni awards ceremony. For more information on the 2015 Homecoming Week activities, interested persons can visit the ABAC web site at www.abac.edu/homecoming.

The 1999 Fillies won the National Junior College Athletic Association Region XVII title in Tifton and then finished second in the NJCAA national tournament in Tucson, Ariz. That marks the highest national finish by a women’s tennis team in the history of ABAC.

“It was a fun team to be a part of,” Kramer said. “We had very talented local kids from places like Irwinville, Ocilla, and Fitzgerald mixed with the international players from all over the world. I think we learned a lot about each other during the year. It was a dynamic mix.”

Kramer can’t forget the heat of the Arizona desert.

“It was really hot, and the heat took its toll,” Kramer said. “You couldn’t find any shade anywhere. We made a statement because we had green-and-white ABAC umbrellas popping up all over the place. Other schools caught on to that and did the same thing after that year.”
Stanoytcheva, inducted into the Hall of Fame in the inaugural class of 2008, led the charge for the Fillies by winning the national championship at number one singles. She repeated that feat in 2000. She was the Region XVII Most Valuable Player and won first team All-America honors in 1999. The freshman from Bulgaria was also on the Intercollegiate Tennis Association All-America team and was named the ITA Player to Watch.

Other team members were Annamaria Hodi from Hungary, Luciana Tamburini from Brazil, Nicola Sharp from Zimbabwe, Louise Holmvik from Sweden, and Georgians Amy Hopkins, Sabrina Harper, Casie Hodges, and Jodie Rayl. Hodi was named to the ITA All-America team and was named All-Region in singles and doubles. Tamburini and Holmvik were named All-Region in singles and doubles.

Sharp was a second team NJCAA All-America selection and was an All-Region selection in singles and doubles. Hopkins won All-Region in singles, and Harper was named All-Region in doubles. Rayl received the prestigious Donaldson Award at the commencement ceremony for her academic prowess. She has now returned to ABAC as the Chief Operating Officer of the ABAC Foundation.

Kramer was selected as the NJCAA Region XVII Coach of the Year after his team compiled a record of 17-10 and won the state championship.

Other 2015 Hall of Fame inductees include Monika Lalewicz, Ralph Bryant, Tommy Dial, Sonny Skinner, and Dr. Larry Moorman, and his wife, Debra.

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