For IMMEDIATE Release       March 9, 2015

Canadian Tennis Player Named to ABAC Hall of Fame

TIFTON—When Monika Lalewicz was a student at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College, she majored in business. When she left the classroom and walked on to the tennis court, she was all business, all the time.
Lalewicz, a two-time national women’s tennis player of the year, has been named to the 2015 class of the 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 event is a part of the ABAC Homecoming Week activities. Athletics Director Alan Kramer said that persons 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/alumni.

A native of Mississauga, Canada, Lalewicz was named the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) Player of the Year in both 2008 and 2009. She won the NJCAA national championship at number one singles in 2008 when she defeated defending national champion Kasia Siwosz from Cowley County (Kans.) Community College 6-3, 6-3 in the title match. Lalewicz also beat Siwosz for the 2007 Intercollegiate Tennis Association (ITA) National Small College Championship in Mobile, Ala.

“Winning was bittersweet in a way,” Lalewicz said in a recent interview. “It was something I had been working so hard for all year long. Then it was really nerve-racking. When it was over, it was great.”

Lalewicz finished second in the number one singles category in the NJCAA national tournament in 2009 when she lost to Jillian O’Neill from Hillsborough (Fla.) Community College, 6-3, 4-6, 6-3 in the final match of her ABAC career.
“That was tough but she was a good friend of mine,” Lalewicz said. “I had been competing with her all year. It wasn’t like playing against somebody I didn’t even know.”

Lalewicz was ever so close to the unprecedented effort of the late Milena Stanoytcheva, who won back-to-back national titles at number one singles for ABAC in 1999 and 2000. Stanoytcheva was selected for the inaugural class of the ABAC Hall of Fame in 2008.

“Attending ABAC was one of the best experiences of my life,” Lalewicz said. “I met amazing people in Georgia, and I still keep in touch with a lot of friends I have there. The best thing about ABAC was the people. Tifton is the friendliest place I have ever been, and the hospitality was phenomenal.

“When I first came to Tifton, it was quite a culture shock. I was moving from a big city to a small town. I drove down to Miami in August and stopped by ABAC. It brought back a flood of memories. Georgia is like a second home to me now.”

The talented lefthander led the Fillies to a fourth place finish in the national tournament in 2008 and to a sixth place finish in 2009. Lalewicz was named to the ITA National Collegiate All-Star Team, earning an opportunity to participate in a ceremony at the U.S. Open in New York City in 2008.

“She is a world class player,” Kramer, former coach of the ABAC team, said at that time. “She is a top college athlete at any level of play.”

A two-time Most Valuable Player of the NJCAA Region XVII tournament at the Red Hill Tennis Center at ABAC, Lalewicz powered the Fillies to their 15th and 16th consecutive state championships in 2008 and 2009. At the ITA Small College Championship tournament during
her freshman year, Lalewicz received the James O’Hara Sargent Sportsmanship Award presented by Rolex Watch, USA.

Lalewicz was the top player in Ontario, Canada in the Under 12, Under 14, Under 16 and Under 18 age groups. She was ranked first in Canada as an Under 16 player in both singles and doubles, according to an article in “The Mississauga News.”

In the same article, she lauded Kramer’s coaching expertise.

“He has helped me and the team tremendously on and off the court,” Lalewicz said. “Every day he strives to make us better players and people, while having fun at the same time. I couldn’t have asked for a better coach.”

Other 2015 Hall of Fame inductees include Sonny Skinner, Ralph Bryant, Tommy Dial, Dr. Larry and Debra Moorman, and the 1999 ABAC women’s tennis team.

###