

Rodriguez adjusts in first season

By DOUG AUBE
Staff Writer

USC women's tennis coach Arlo Elkins has put together a team with a strong international flavor. Six of the eight players on Elkins' roster hail from foreign countries.

This rainbow unit is presently ranked 14th in the nation and recently won the Metro Conference championship, USC's fifth in six years.

One player that epitomizes the flavor of USC's team is sophomore Nathalie Rodriguez from Paris.

Rodriguez came to USC ranked in the top thirty among French women. She participated in the 1989 French Open mixed doubles event and played in the Federation Cup two years for Chile. She has played all of the major international junior tournaments and held a Top 10 junior world ranking in 1987.

Last weekend, she captured the number one flight singles championship in the Metro Tournament. Her success at USC can be

greatly attributed to her experience on the international level, but this experience also created a weakness in her style of play.

"Her junior and international records were very good, and I knew that she would play well for us, but she grew up (playing) on clay (courts) so she was a baseline player," Elkins said. "She is now making that adjustment to come to the net more, and that has helped her."

Rodriguez has become a more complete player now that she has added net play to her arsenal.

"We have been working on my net game, and it has helped me to improve my serve and my volley," she said. "I go to the net more now, and it is a big goal for me to improve my net play. The points are faster, so I don't get as tired."

Rodriguez was not eligible to play last season, and the break helped her to adjust and get ready for college tennis.

"The level of play (on the college circuit) is more intense, there are some very good players," Rod-

riguez said. "I played a lot of good players on the junior and international level, but the top ten here have provided tough competition."

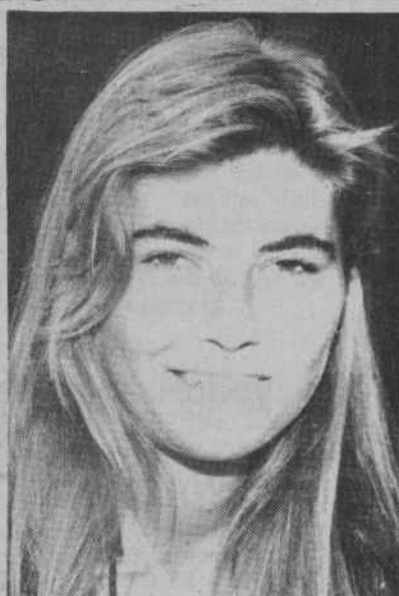
"The time off helped me to get used to the program and do well. It also helped me to learn English," she said.

Rodriguez is currently the 34th-ranked player in the country after jumping ten notches with a win over the number two ranked player, Andrea Farley of the University of Florida.

She also has picked up wins over Emilie Viqueira of the University of California, Shawn McCarthy of the University of Georgia and Cinda Gurney of the University of North Carolina — all ranked in the top 50 in the country.

Her 6-3, 6-3 victory over Buffy Baker of Florida State gained her the No. 1 singles Metro Championship as well as MVP honors.

Rodriguez has compiled an impressive 34-16 career singles record at USC, including 10 wins in a row. Nevertheless, she tries not



Nathalie Rodriguez

to be overconfident.

"I have not lost any in my last ten matches, but the more you play, the more chances you have to win," she said.

She has made the quarter-finals in four tournaments, the semi-finals twice and the finals once.

She also teams with nationally ranked Michelle Duda to form the

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SPORTS BRIEFS

Stoddart, Wyont shine at Invitational

Nigel Stoddart and Shannon Wyont paced the USC men's and women's track and field teams at the Gamecock Invitational held Saturday at Weems Baskin Track.

Stoddart won the 100-meter dash with a time of 10.33 and the 200-meter dash with a time of 21.0 as well as anchoring the last leg of USC's 4 x 100 relay team that won their event.

Wyont won the 3,000-meter run with a time of 10:05.2 and placed second in the 400-meter dash with a time of 58.73.

Other standout performances for the men's team were turned in by: Robert Brooks, first in the 110-hurdles (14.04); David Arnold, first in the 400-intermediate hurdles; Eddie Miller, first in the 400-meter dash (48.30); Rickey Kearns, 800-meter winner with a time of 1:53.78; Mike Hedgecock, first in the 3,000-meter steeplechase (9:19.9); Art Henson, first in the high jump (6-10); and Darren Davis, first in the pole vault (16-0).

For the Lady Gamecocks, Dana Purser won the 1,500-meter run with a time of 4:42.72 and finished second in the 3,000-meter run with a time of 10:05.9. Danielle Adams won the high jump with a leap of 4-feet-6-inches while placing third in the 800-meter run with a time of 2:23.26.

Alexis Fife placed second in the 800-meter run with a time of 2:21.24 while Sue McGhie finished third in the 3,000-meter run with a time 10:31.8.

USC overpowers Tigers in 7-1 win

The USC baseball team defeated Memphis State 7-1 Sunday at Buring Stadium in Memphis in the first game of a doubleheader.

The Gamecocks got off to an early 6-0 lead, including two two-run homers in the first two innings.

Dave Willman, who was 2-of-3 in game one, cracked the first two-

run shot in the first inning, while Sandy Rickett belted the other in inning two.

Winning the game on the mound for USC was Brian Williams, with Brian Beatson coming in after the sixth inning to get the save.

Next action for the Gamecocks is Saturday as the Clemson Tigers come to Sarge Frye Field for a two-game series.

USC claws Tigers 5-1 in mens' tennis

The USC tennis team, ranked eighth nationally, defeated Clemson 5-1 on Saturday in Clemson. The victory was USC's first at Clemson since 1976.

Stephane Simian, also ranked eighth in the nation, took care of Owen Casey 6-2, 6-2 to get the Gamecocks started. Simian is now 48-10 in singles competition. Louie Gloria, USC's No. 2 player was defeated by the Tigers' Nicklas Johansson 7-6, 6-4 for Clemson's only win.

Dave Hopper won over Greg Seilkop 6-4, 6-3; Mark Palus defeated Todd Watkins 4-6, 7-5, 6-3, and Eric Sydow rolled over J. L. Guillou 6-1, 6-4.

USC improves to 17-8 and takes on Princeton today at the Sam Daniel Tennis Center at 1 p.m. Clemson falls to 16-18.

Bowling team one strike from title

The USC bowling team finished second over the weekend at the national college team championships.

Jerry Horne, who averaged 212 in the double-elimination tournament, led the Gamecocks to the championship round against Northern Illinois.

The three-game championship was led by USC 527-470 going into the final match but lost after the Huskies outscored them 240-176 in the third and final game. The final score was 719-703.

Other Gamecock averages were Neil Makison (199), John Lee (199), Tim Rice (195) and Andy Zook (190).

Columnist laments Braves' past, looks to future

As the beginning of summer approaches, the last thing most people want to hear about is a major league baseball team mired in last place, 10-and-a-half games out only 15 games into the season.

So, when I decided to dedicate this semester's last Pep Talk to the Atlanta Braves, I knew I'd catch some flak.

But I am an eternal optimist, and if I can help gain the Braves a few more fans and thus put more fannies in the seats at Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium, which could in turn provide enough excitement to get the players a bit more enthusiastic and finally help the Braves win a few more games and maybe even the division... well, I did say I was an eternal optimist.

Hope springs eternal at the beginning of every season but this optimism usually fades when the Braves lose 10 games before anyone else in the Major League.

After a 1-1 start this season, I thought that maybe, just maybe, the Braves could actually deserve a



DOUG AUBE

Pep Talk

note of optimism.

But 13 games later the Braves had faltered to a 2-13 record and seemed to be living up to the "bad news Braves" image.

I still think that they have a pretty good team.

A number of bad trades, the Brett Butler for Len Barker deal stands out, and the lack of continuity from one season to the next both have contributed to the Braves averaging 96 losses a season over the last four years.

If you add to that a weak minor league farm system, it seems that there is no hope.

But as the Braves enter the decade of the '90's, their farm system is starting to develop some good players, and the new faces on

the "major league team" (notice how major league is in quotes) should help halt the 100-loss seasons.

Over the last two seasons, the Braves have gone with a youth movement in their starting rotation and benefits will be reaped. Well, one day.

The payoff of this patience has started to show itself this season as the starting rotation of Tom "Terrific" Glavine, "Pistol" Pete Smith, John "Smoking" Smoltz, Marty Clary and Derek Lilliquist have combined to form one of the best young starting staffs in the National League.

Sure, the Braves' team ERA is 6.29 and last in the league, but the relief pitching hasn't gotten anyone out this season.

Reliever Mike Stanton was supposed to be the big closer, but has seen his ERA balloon to 16.71 and last in league among all pitchers with three or more decisions, he is 0-3.

Stanton was recently lost for at least fifteen days with an inflammation of his shoulder.

Thank goodness for the disabled list.

If you add to the starting rotation Charlie Leibrant, who will contribute if he can heal his rotator cuff injury, than you have a very formidable battery.

The definite weak spot is relief pitching but since this is an optimistic look at the Braves, I'll avoid that topic.

If (what a big word) first baseman Nick Esasky can recover from an early season injury soon, then his bat should help the Braves improve on their 2.9 average runs per game.

He had 30 homeruns and 108 RBIs last season for the Boston Red Sox.

Other newcomers Jim Presley and Ernie Whitt should help to relieve some of the pressure off Dale

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