

## ASU Women's Tennis Sneaks Past Elon

Written by Paul Blascovich

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With the team's fourth home victory in as many matches, Appalachian State University defeated Southern Conference rival Elon, 4-3, in both teams' conference opener at Yonahlossee Racquet Club

on Tuesday. With the win, Appalachian (5-3, 1-0 SoCon) retains its perfect record on its home courts, while Elon (9-4, 0-1 SoCon) loses its first match against a non-ranked opponent.

"This was an incredible win for our team," noted head coach Colin Crothers. "Elon is a very strong team. We played great today, and it was great to play on our own courts; that advantage might have been the difference in today's match."

Doubles action began with Appalachian's top pair, juniors Ellie Linsell (Southampton, England/Cheam) and Jennifer Ansari (Greensboro, N.C./Walter Hines Page), falling down a break and trailing 2-3, but the Apps broke serve to tie the match, 3-3. Linsell and Ansari broke two more times to take a 7-3 lead and eventually sealed the No. 1 pairs match, 8-5.

In the No. 2 doubles spot, Appalachian's Gisela Fernandez (Guadalajara, Mexico/TEC Monterrey) and Gabriela Celi (Orlando, Fla./Lake Howell) found themselves down a break point on three separate occasions, but retorted in kind and found themselves deadlocked with their Phoenix foes, 8-8. In the tiebreaker, the ASU seniors scored three straight after the court change and picked up the 9-8(7-5) win to clinch the doubles point.

At No. 3 doubles, Elon's Bri Berne and Maria Camara took the match in a tiebreaker, 8-7 (7-5). In singles action, Linsell recovered from a tough first set and forced a tiebreak in the second but was unable to hold off a charging Jordan Johnston, who won the point for the Phoenix, 6-1, 7-6(7-1), tying the match 1-1.

In the No. 2 singles match, Appalachian's Ansari protected her own serve for the duration of the match and cruised to a 6-2, 6-4 win. Ansari's efforts put Appalachian back on top, 2-1.

ASU's Celi squared off against Viviana Stavreva in a daunting match at No. 3 singles. Stavreva pulled out a 6-4 first set win before Celi responded to take the second, 6-3. The Mountaineer broke twice to take a 4-1 lead and was able to hold on for a 4-6, 6-3, 6-4 victory, extending the ASU lead to 3-1 overall.

Determined to extend the match, the Phoenix recouped a point with a solid showing at No. 4 singles, with Frida Jansaker stealing the match, 6-2, 6-0.

At No. 5 singles, Elon's Camara picked up a 6-1 win in the first set, but Appalachian's Kim-Lea Dinh (Maisons-Alfort, France/Lyceee Eugene Delacroix) took an early break and held on to lead 5-3 in the second set. EU's Camara held tough and picked up four straight games to win the set and her match, 6-1, 7-5, leveling the team score at 3-3.

With the match on the line, ASU's No. 6 Gabby Gabriel (Weddington, N.C./Providence Day) pocketed a 4-0 lead in the opening set before her opponent, Berne, broke twice to close the gap to 4-3. The Appalachian State freshman regained her composure, sealing the first stanza, 6-3.

With the second set tied 2-2, Gabriel broke to make it a 3-2 set but Berne tied the set at 4-4. As the Mountaineers and gallery closed in to cheer on the players, Gabriel picked up a critical break point to go ahead 6-5, but Elon's Berne broke back to force a tiebreaker. With the score at 5-5, Gabriel tallied the final two points to seal the deal, 6-3, 7-6(7-5), and clinch the 4-3 win for Appalachian State.

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The Mountaineers look to continue their success at Yonahlossee with another home match on Wednesday, as they will face UNC Asheville (4-7) in a non-conference match beginning at 1:30 p.m.