



PHOTO BY MICHAEL LACY

The duo of Tim Blenkiron and Rob Norton won their match Sunday.

Tennis

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Arizona State Friday, followed by No. 5 Arizona on Saturday.

Men's Tennis

Probably on its best run of the season with a three-game winning streak, the UNLV men's tennis team is fighting to get back into the Big West hunt.

The Rebels (8-8 overall, 5-1 Big West) fell out of the national ranks last week for the first time in two years and answered back with two big wins over ranked teams.

They started the weekend beating No. 46 Arizona Friday, 4-3. The Rebels fell behind quickly in the match when they dropped two of three doubles matches. Both Schrader/Smith and Blenkiron/Norton dropped their matches while Petterson/Pohjola won easily.

Down by two, the Rebels won four of six singles matches for the come-from-behind victory. Petterson, ranked 17th nationally, won a close match, 7-5, 6-4. Norton, Schrader and Smith also came up with big wins. Blenkiron and Pohjola were the only losses on the singles side.

"San Diego may have been a

bigger win," coach Larry Easley said. "But the Arizona match gave a lot of confidence for San Diego."

The Rebels played their most inspired tennis of the season on Sunday, when they dominated UC San Diego, 5-1. The most exciting match was on the No. 2 court where a fired up Blenkiron/Norton fell behind early, only to fight back and win the set, 8-6. At one point, Norton won three straight aces.

"They got excited which is good," Easley said. "Because sometimes they can real lackadaisical also. And when they get fired up it helps the others too."

Petterson/Pohjola took very little time to dispose of their opponents, winning 8-3. Schrader/Smith lost the other doubles match.

In singles action, the Rebels took every spot except No. 6, where Schrader fell in straight sets. Petterson continued his dominance, winning his set, 6-4, 6-4. Blenkiron, Norton, Pohjola and Smith all came out with wins.

"That was our best match so far, we beat them good," Easley said.

The Rebels will travel to the beach next to face No. 4 Pepperdine on Saturday.

Corner

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confirms the belief that college athletics, basketball on this campus in particular, is big business.

When Guinn first bought out Rollie Massimino and then hired Grgurich, it was purely a business move. Scholarship ticket sales were sagging until Gerg came back.

Now, the school needs to hire a coach that meets certain criteria. He must be somewhat of a name, have those recruiting ties, and fit under certain financial standards - three years at \$300,000 annually.

When Gerg was hired, it was a

financial decision. It just wasn't seen as such because the community was so excited about Gerg's return.

—Paul Gutierrez is the Sports Editor at The Rebel Yell.

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Gemma

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various duties include constructing the media guides, press releases and statistical updates that are essential to a sports reporter.

"I like dealing with the media," Gemma said. "You have to always remember that they have a job to do, and you can't shut yourself off from them. You have to be available. Obviously you can't tell them everything, but you should be there for them."

While Gemma is always there for the media, Las Vegas has always been here for him. A native of the city, Gemma graduated from Bishop Gorman High in 1978. It was there that Gemma, then a senior second baseman on the baseball team, experienced what can only be described as bittersweet.

Gemma captured the squad's Most Outstanding Player Award on a team that finished with a record of 0-24.

"That was a rough year," Gemma said. "I learned a lot about how fun it is to win and how it's not so fun to lose. But you should be a good sport through the whole thing. I can laugh about it now, but it wasn't too funny then."

After graduating, Gemma came to UNLV and graduated in 1982 with a bachelor's degree in Communication Theory. As a freshman, Gemma began interning at Sports Information.

With parents that were friends with Hustlin' Rebel coach Fred Dallimore, and a brother, Joe, that was in his senior year on the team, Gemma helped out with stats.

Now in his 14th season with the baseball team (he also worked for the Las Vegas Silver Streaks of the now-defunct World Basketball League from 1988-90), Gemma has seen the program evolve from the days of watching games on the grassy knoll of Roger Barnson Field to last year's opening of Earl E. Wilson Stadium.

"I like dealing with the media. You have to always remember that they have a job to do, and you can't shut yourself off from them. You have to be available. Obviously you can't tell them everything, but you should be there for them."

—Jim Gemma

"I go back to '76 watching UNLV baseball out here when it was the old field," Gemma said. "And to see it now, it's a great source of pride."

"Probably the best day ever in athletics that I'll ever have was last year when we opened the stadium and had 2,500 people here. That was a dream come true because you never thought you'd see this place like it is now."

While Gemma once had dreams of becoming a publicist for a Major League Baseball or NBA team, recent reflections have geared a desire to stay at UNLV.

"I'd like to run the office one of these days," he said. "If anybody would ever give me a chance in the administration, I'd like to be the sports information director. Being an assistant so long, I think if it's not one of your goals, you should maybe not do it. But I would like to do that."

If Scott Gulbransen, currently the student assistant at sports information, had his way, Gemma would deserve the title "Chief" for more traditional reasons.

"I think Jimmy's the heart of the office because he's been here so long," Gulbransen said. "He works so hard. I think it's going to pay off for him because eventually I think he'll be the SID at UNLV, because he deserves it."

"I know that for me, being a young person trying to learn the ropes of sports information, he's kinda helped me too. ...he's been a great example to learn from."

While Gemma clearly loves what he does for a living, he

points out that it isn't all kicking back and watching a ballgame.

"It gets to be a grind after a while," Gemma said. "I've only had two or three days off in the last 60 or 70 days, so sometimes I'm like, 'What the heck am I doing?' But that's just a labor of love."

But sports isn't the only love in Gemma's life. Jim and his fiancée, Alirose, are engaged to be married in June. How will she accept his hectic schedule?

"I'm fortunate enough to have met somebody that likes sports," Gemma said. "She played sports; and she's into sports. And she understands my schedule - which is good."

But when Gemma does have time to kick back, he spends it - of course - watching sporting events.

"I like to see sports and just sit and relax and not have to do anything," Gemma said. "People probably don't understand that. It's just a great relaxation to just go to a Thunder game and kick back, or go to a concert."

That's the kind of guy Gemma is. When he does something, he does it full tilt.

"He's a very dedicated, committed, loyal individual," assistant SID Chris Johnson said. "He's the kind of guy that every staff needs to have to get the job done."

"He's very unheralded for the work he does. He just does it quietly, and goes about his business, and doesn't get a lot of the respect he deserves. This office wouldn't function without Jimmy ... we would be lost in here without him."

While Gemma hasn't received the accolades many feel he deserves, he'll continue to do the job for the reason he started it - simply for the love of it.

"If you love sports, obviously this is the thing to be in," Gemma said. "If you don't like sports, then you're crazy to even be in this."

And who would ever accuse a man in a red, plaid shirt and a striped tie of being crazy?

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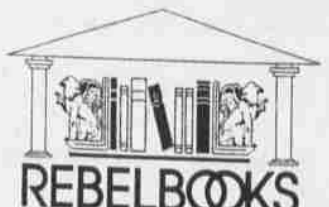
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