

# WASHINGTON HUSKIES 2008-09 MEN'S TENNIS

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**CREDITS:** The 2008-09 University of Washington men's tennis media guide was written and edited by Michael Bruscas, Assistant Athletic Communications Director. Design and layout done entirely in-house by Bruscas and Jonathan Soriano. Cover designs by Soriano and Evelyn Rice. Photography by Richard McNery, David Gonzales, Joanie Komura, Bruce Terami, and Bruscas. Printing coordinated by UW Publications Services (Jeff Todd). Please send additions or corrections to Bruscas.



# HUSKY ATHLETICS



## QUICK FACTS

**Institution:** ..... University of Washington  
**Location:** ..... Seattle, Wash.  
**Founded:** ..... Nov. 4, 1861  
**Enrollment:** ..... 42,000 (31,400 undergrad)  
**Nickname:** ..... Huskies  
**Colors:** ..... Purple and Gold  
**Conference:** ..... Pacific-10  
**Home Indoor Facility:** ..... Lloyd Nordstrom Tennis Center (278)  
**Home Outdoor Facility:** ..... Bill Quillian Courts (900)  
**Head Coach:** ..... Matt Anger (USC '84)  
**Record at UW:** ..... 233-110 / 14 years  
**Career Record:** ..... same  
**Phone:** ..... (206) 543-1131  
**Associate Head Coach:** ..... Chris Russell (UC Santa Barbara '85)  
**Phone:** ..... (206) 685-8937  
**2007-08 Overall Record:** ..... 14-10  
**2008 Conference Record/Place:** ..... 2-5 (6th)  
**2008 NCAA Championships:** ..... First Round  
**Final ITA Team Ranking:** ..... No. 36  
**Letterwinners Returning/Lost:** ..... 8/1  
**All-Pac-10 Players Returning:** ..... Patrik Fischer (2nd Team)  
..... Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan (honorable mention)  
**Additional Team Members Returning:** ..... 3  
**Newcomers:** ..... 1

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## GoHUSKIES.COM

The latest, official information on 2009 Washington Huskies Men's Tennis including match times, schedules, statistics, rosters, bios, live videos, and scores can be found at **www.GoHuskies.com**

Home events from November through February will be played in the Lloyd Nordstrom Tennis Center. All others will be at Bill Quillian Courts, weather permitting.

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# SEASON PR

With nine players in their first or second year on the roster and only one senior, the 2008 season involved a great deal of learning on the fly for the Washington men's tennis team. They learned they possess the talent to compete with the nation's best college teams, as the Huskies played host to the ITA National Team Indoor Championships, and faced off against a whopping 11 of the Top-30 teams based on the final ITA Rankings. They learned what it takes to defeat some of those teams, as the Huskies upset 12th-ranked Pepperdine and 24th-ranked Alabama.

Individually, Washington's top two singles players, Patrik Fischer and Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan, learned how their games stacked up against the best players in the nation, and earned their first singles rankings. Meanwhile, despite the learning curve and loaded schedule, the Huskies posted a winning record and made it back to the NCAA tournament, exactly as they have done in every one of head coach Matt Anger's 14 seasons at UW.

This season, the task facing the Huskies will be getting the most out of their ability day in and day out, and finding a means to victory when everything is not completely clicking. With nearly the entire roster returning, Washington will be one year older and one year wiser, and expects that will translate into greater consistency and positive results.

"We were a very young team. Out of twelve guys, seven were freshmen, and the good news was how much they learned about the college year and dealing with schoolwork and tennis," said Coach Anger. "Even with a young team, based on the final rankings, we only had two losses to teams outside the Top-25. When I look back on that I'm impressed."

The Huskies return seven players that started at least seven dual matches last year, but with only one newcomer who will redshirt this year, the onus will be on each of the returners to take their games to another level. Washington has been to the NCAA Round of 16 five times this decade, and hopes a year's worth of improvement will take them back to that point.

"We were a little inconsistent with our play, and I think that's where we're going to be most improved this upcoming year," said Anger. "We're still going to be young, but I think having that one more year of experience, even though it's just one year, it's going to be a tremendous advantage for us."

One big difference heading into the dual season is the establishment of Fischer and Nedunchezhiyan at the top of the singles lineup. The two settled into the top two spots last season, with Fischer jumping up from No. 4 as a sophomore to the top spot as a junior, and Nedunchezhiyan earning the second position as a true freshman. Both earned All-Pac-10 accolades for their play, and in the fall preseason rankings, Fischer was ranked 56th and Nedunchezhiyan 74th.

"Going into last year, in the fall, we didn't have a player ranked in the top-100. I think that was an area of concern for our team," Anger said. "This year, as we are getting started, we've got two guys that are already ranked in the top-100. They, like our overall team, were able to do better than a lot of people thought, and were pretty consistent last year, and I think they're going to do even better this year with that experience behind them."

Despite losing just one player, there was no better teammate than Andy Kuharsky, who completed his career as one of the ten winningest Huskies in combined singles and doubles wins. On and off the court, Kuharsky's leadership was unique and much appreciated by his coaches and teammates.

"Andy was an absolute pleasure all four years. We made the tournament every year, and his first couple years we made it to the Sweet-16 and had a Pac-10 title in there, but all through that he was a great person and great student, and a great leader with the team," said Anger. "I think a leadership role is something that won't be taken up by just

one guy. Patrik and David Chu, our co-captains, are leaders, but in a soft-spoken way. I would also say Martin Kildahl has become more of a leader with that void left by Andy. I think Martin is someone that the guys really trust and see how he's improved, and I think he is somebody that is really starting to become a leader also."

Having now gone through all the twists and turns of a typical college season together, the Huskies know what's in store for them. Now they will get a chance to show the rest of the country just how much they have learned.

## The Lineup

With so many players returning that saw significant playing time in 2008, sorting out the exact lineup that optimizes Washington's talent in both singles and doubles will be a challenge for Coach Anger. Thankfully, there are no longer any concerns about UW's ability at the top of the lineup. Husky men have captured seven All-American honors in singles over the past 10 years, and Patrik Fischer and Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan certainly have the potential to add to that total.

Fischer led the way last season with an all-court game and great consistency from the baseline. He went 13-9 in dual play and defeated four ranked players based on the final rankings. Heading into his senior season, Fischer should match up well with the top player on any team according to Anger.

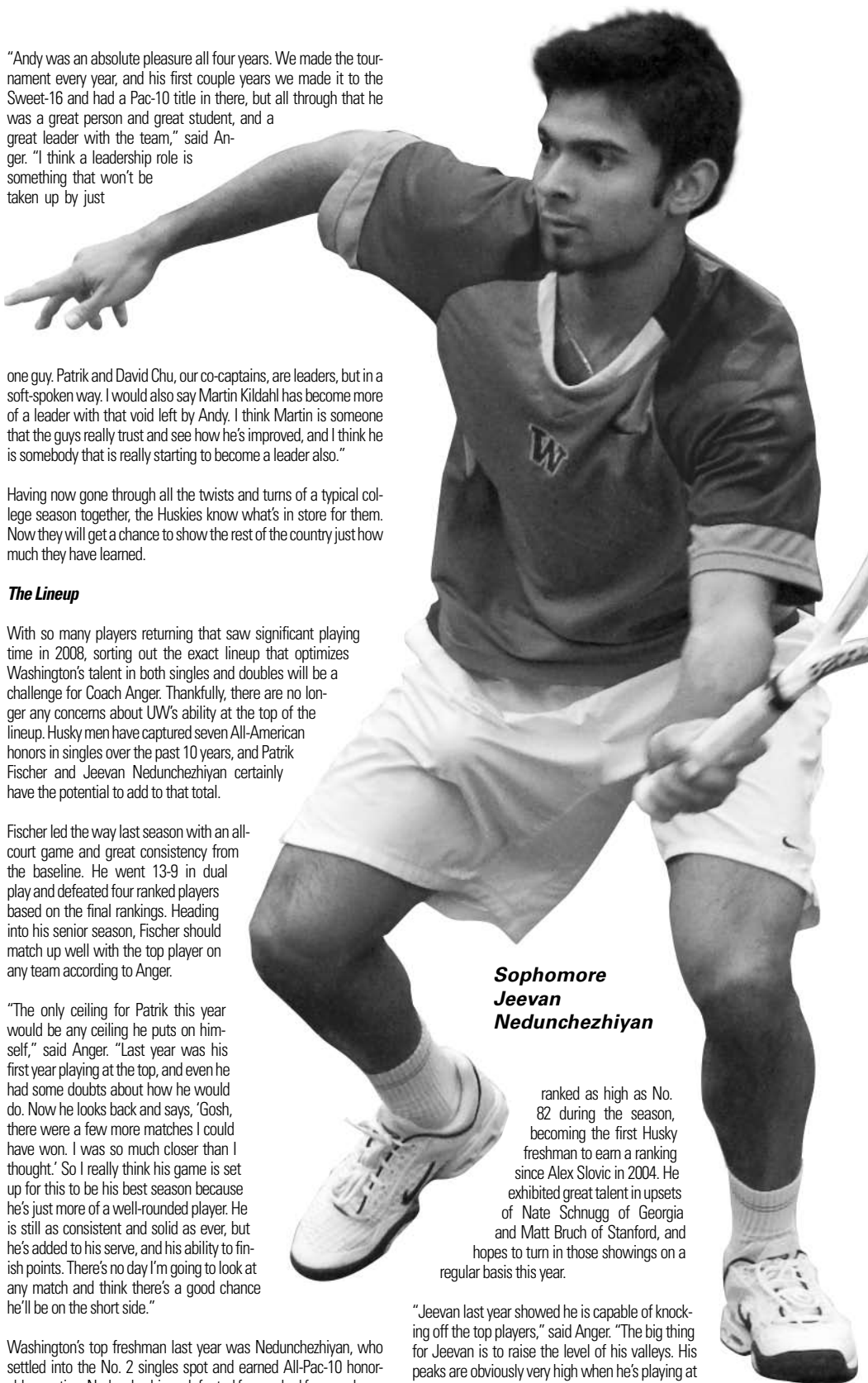
"The only ceiling for Patrik this year would be any ceiling he puts on himself," said Anger. "Last year was his first year playing at the top, and even he had some doubts about how he would do. Now he looks back and says, 'Gosh, there were a few more matches I could have won. I was so much closer than I thought.' So I really think his game is set up for this to be his best season because he's just more of a well-rounded player. He is still as consistent and solid as ever, but he's added to his serve, and his ability to finish points. There's no day I'm going to look at any match and think there's a good chance he'll be on the short side."

Washington's top freshman last year was Nedunchezhiyan, who settled into the No. 2 singles spot and earned All-Pac-10 honorable mention. Nedunchezhiyan defeated four ranked foes, and was

## Sophomore Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan

ranked as high as No. 82 during the season, becoming the first Husky freshman to earn a ranking since Alex Slovic in 2004. He exhibited great talent in upsets of Nate Schnugg of Georgia and Matt Bruch of Stanford, and hopes to turn in those showings on a regular basis this year.

"Jeevan last year showed he is capable of knocking off the top players," said Anger. "The big thing for Jeevan is to raise the level of his valleys. His peaks are obviously very high when he's playing at his best. He needs to make sure he is able to beat



# EVIEW

better players on days when he doesn't feel at his best, because that is a key a lot of times in tennis; who you can beat on your bad day. That is definitely something we've been working on and trying to drive home this fall."

The Huskies will have several contenders for the middle of the singles lineup. Kuharsky solidified the No. 3 spot last season, so someone will be called upon to move up this spring. Junior Derek Drabble and sophomore Martin Kildahl could be up for the task. Drabble has had a very solid first two seasons, winning numerous clutch matches and posing problems with his big serve and volleys. Kildahl showed rapid improvement through his freshman season and that trend has continued through the summer and fall.

"From the beginning I've felt that Derek can do well, and I think he is now starting to truly believe it, rather than just hearing me tell him," Anger said. "Another reason I am optimistic about the 2009 season with Derek is he has been healthy all fall. In his first two years he was getting hurt much of the time and rarely able to go through the conditioning. This fall, it's not even close how much more fit he is this year compared to the last two years."

Kildahl first broke into the doubles lineup last year, and then won his first six dual matches once he entered the singles lineup. He should be starting in both from the first match this year.

"To this point, at the end of the fall, Martin might be our most improved player. His game really came on at the end of last year. I think he could be jumping up even higher as we start the 2009 season," said Anger. "What I see in him now compared to what I saw last year, he is the perfect example when we look at improved consistency."

In addition to Fischer, the Huskies will rely on seniors David Chu and Ryo Sekiguchi, two experienced players credited with giving their all, every day, in matches and on the practice courts. Chu has seen an increased role in each of the past two seasons, and looks to be in position for his best season yet. He led the team with 24 singles wins in 2008 and had big wins against UCLA, Arizona, and Pepperdine.

"David Chu is somebody that has every day made me feel honored to coach him, because he is receptive, and works so hard," said Anger. "On his worst day, he has given a teammate incredible practice and work. That is something that never shows up in the line score, and yet that's something that, as coaches, Chris and I see every day. We need to make sure we enjoy all of those moments this year, because we will definitely miss it when we get to June of 2009. In the past David has been on that border, whether or not he's starting, but he will definitely be starting for us this year in singles from day one and all the way through."

Sekiguchi began the season on fire, winning nine of his first 10 dual matches. He went 3-0 in the ITA National Team Indoor tournament last season, but ended the year on a frustrating losing skid. Sekiguchi ended the fall season with six wins in a row, showing that he is back on track.

"Ryo is a very solid player, like David he is incredible for us in practice. We gain from Ryo every day," said Anger. "Last year he had just an incredible start, but he had one loss in particular and it really threw him off. I'm hoping that as a senior now he's not going to let one setback or one off day throw him for any length of time. With his game he should be able to do that and I expect that from him this year."

Other young players that will be looking for breakout seasons include sophomores Tobi Obenaus, Brad Bator, Alex Rosinski, and Skyler Tateishi. Obenaus had a strong start to his freshman season, but a knee injury hampered his progress and he is just now back at full strength after not playing the fall season. Bator and Rosinski have made major progress in doubles and could be looking at a starting spot.

Redshirt freshman Matt Stith got his first match play during the fall and picked up his first wins. However, Anger says Stith has made his greatest strides since fall play ended, and has put himself in the mix with his play of late. Adding depth to the practice squad is true freshman Aaron Wong, a walk-on from Vancouver, B.C. who will redshirt his first season.

As far as the doubles lineup, Fischer and Nedunchezhiyan grew into the No. 1 role during the season last year, and were UW's top duo in the fall, winning a pair of matches in the ITA All-American Championships qualifying draw, and reaching the doubles final at ITA Regionals. However, Anger is not ready to commit to a lineup just yet, and the Huskies as a team excelled in doubles during the fall. Three different teams reached the quarterfinals at ITA Regionals, so there is no lack of options.

"Last year by the end of the year, Patrik and Jeevan were definitely our best doubles team and they deserved to be playing at number one, and I would say this fall they were our most consistent team without a doubt," said Anger. "However, we still may consider shuffling the teams. We did that a lot in fall practice, even though we didn't do it in the tournaments. We've practiced a lot with different pairings, and coming off the break, seeing where everybody is, that's when we'll form our teams."

Where last season was marked by uncertainty as seven players played their first matches as Huskies, this year's team can look at that as a jumping off point. Despite tennis' individual nature, confidence in the player to either side can help a team a great deal, and Coach Anger sees that trust growing.

"I think there's a lot more faith amongst the guys in their teammates this season," said Anger. "I think last year guys were a little worried about how we might do at the top of the lineup. Now they look out and see how well Patrik is playing and Jeevan is playing, and they've been through it now. They've seen guys that have done very well at five and six in the lineup, and we've got those guys back. So there's that faith where if each guy is going out and playing well, we're going to be a very, very solid team."

## The Schedule

Once again Washington has assembled a nonconference schedule featuring several of the elite teams in the nation to challenge them, along with the always difficult Pac-10 conference slate. The schedule will give the Huskies every chance to prepare for the NCAA Championships with difficult matches at home, on the road and at neutral sites.

The dual season begins January 10 against Eastern Washington at the Nordstrom Tennis Center. The first major test for the Huskies comes just two weeks into the season, as UW hosts Ohio State on January 25. The Buckeyes finished last season ranked third in the nation and with several returning All-Americans, could be the nation's top-ranked team when the first 2009 rankings are released.

After the Ohio State match, the Huskies will head across the country to Athens, Georgia, home of the two-time defending NCAA Champion Georgia Bulldogs. This year is the first time that the ITA National Team Indoor Championships, which Washington routinely hosts, has expanded to include qualifying rounds. Four-team qualifying brackets will be held throughout the country, with Washington, Indiana, and South Carolina entered in the bracket hosted by Georgia. The Huskies will play Indiana on January 30, with the winner potentially facing Georgia for the right to play at National Team Indoors in Chicago.

"Even our first match against Eastern Washington will be a challenge; they made the NCAA tournament last year for the first time," Anger said. "But later in January we will be hosting Ohio State, and I think they will be ranked No. 1, so that will be a great experience for us. With the expanded National Team Indoor field, we will be on the road in Athens, Georgia, a very tough place to play, but our guys are really looking forward to that. They've heard stories about Athens, so they can't wait to be there. Of course the catch on all of that is we play Indiana, we don't play Georgia first, so they can't be overlooked."

Also highlighting the home schedule is the Great Northwest Shootout held from February 6-8. This year's event is a three-team round robin between Washington, Oklahoma, and Boise State. Other significant home matches include Oregon (Feb. 20), Fresno State (Feb. 22), Minnesota (March 6), Texas A&M (March 8), Arizona (March 29), and California and Stanford on April 10th and 11th, respectively.

The Huskies also make a trip to Malibu where they will play Michigan in a neutral site match on Feb. 27, before going up against Pepperdine on March 1. The Wolverines were 16th in the final ITA rankings last season, while the Waves finished 12th. Washington will also make a trip to the L.A. schools in early April, and conclude the year with its annual trip to the Pac-10 Championships in Ojai, Calif. from April 23-26.

The conference is unfortunately one team smaller this year, as Arizona State dropped its men's tennis program after the 2008 season. With seven Pac-10 teams remaining, each match takes on that much more importance.

"The conference two years ago struggled, but really bounced back strong the last two seasons, and should be even more difficult this year. But I don't think it helps anyone that Arizona State dropped its tennis program," said Anger. "When you don't have as many teams, now one loss or one victory, which already were crucial, just take on an even greater importance. The Pac-10—when you look at it historically, it's not even close—is the dominant tennis conference, and will always be tough. The good news is that's why guys want to come to Pac-10 schools, they want the best competition."

Within the conference and without, the Huskies will certainly face the best competition the NCAA has to offer, with the end result hopefully being a wealth of experience and confidence to draw from as they look to make another run in the NCAA Championships this May.