

WASHINGTON HUSKIES 2008-09 WOMEN'S TENNIS

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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: Jill Hultquist
Record at UW: 20-43 / 3 years
Career Record: same
Phone: (206) 543-1116
Assistant Coach: Damon Coupe
Phone: (206) 685-7019
2007-08 Overall Record: 12-10
2008 Conference Record/Place: 2-6 (6th)
2008 NCAA Championships: First Round
Final ITA Team Ranking: No. 40
Letterwinners Returning/Lost: 5/4
All-Pac-10 Players Returning: Venise Chan (2nd Team)
Additional Team Members Returning: 2
Newcomers: 3

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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

Washington women's tennis was back in many ways last season. The Huskies were back in the NCAA Championships for the first time since 2005. They were back in the Top-40 after beginning the year ranked only 70th. Once again they featured one of the nation's best players in freshman NCAA Singles participant Venise Chan. And yet for a program that has twice been to the NCAA Quarterfinals this decade, the success of 2008 is being treated as a stepping stone to truly bringing Husky tennis all the way back to one of the country's elite.

The starting point for the Husky women has been significantly raised heading into the 2009 season. Last season's goals have become this season's expectations, and fourth-year head coach Jill Hultquist is intent on continuing to raise the bar.

"I'm happy with what we've done, but I'm still not satisfied," says Hultquist. "I want more and I expect more now. I know where the Huskies were before, we were Top-10. NCAA tennis has gotten really competitive and really deep, but I think the Huskies can go much further, and that's what we are working towards."

This year's squad will have plenty of time to work together to achieve their goals, as Washington does not have a single senior on the roster. The Huskies are young but very talented; likely the most skilled UW team since the last Elite Eight group in 2004. The potential for becoming a great team certainly exists, but as always it will require supreme dedication and hard work on a daily basis.

"What went right last year was that we had a lot of team unity, and every girl on the team really wanted to work hard," said Hultquist. "We were all on the same page as far as what we wanted to do and where we wanted to get to. Every girl wanted to get back to NCAA's and they worked hard for it. I think our next goal will be getting back into the Top-25."

Leading the effort will be Chan, who will look to continue expanding her game as a sophomore now. Chan, a native of Hong Kong, China, accepted the No. 1 singles role the moment she arrived on campus, and held her own in the ferocious Pac-10. Along the way Chan had memorable wins over former NCAA Champion Susie Babos of Cal, defending Pac-10 Champion Lindsey Nelson of USC, and a third-set tie-break win over Nadia Abdala of Arizona State that clinched a 4-3 win, easily UW's biggest win in three years. Most importantly, Chan's presence at the front of the lineup helped change the tone of the previous two years, where now the team knew they always had a chance at the top against the best teams.

"As a freshman it's hard to come in and play number one but she did a great job. She had some wins against Top-20 players in the country," said Hultquist. "When you put Venise out on the court you know you're going to get a good match and she's going to be competitive with all the number one players in the country, and that's what you need. Especially at the Pac-10 level, you need someone that's very competitive, and we were very happy that she could be that for us."

Despite losing three starters from last year's team, Hultquist has plenty of reason to be confident that the women will continue their ascension based on the trio of newcomers

that she and assistant coach Damon Coupe have brought to the University. Freshmen Denise Dy (San Jose, Calif.) and Samantha Smith (Los Angeles, Calif.), and sophomore transfer Lina Xu (Shanghai, China/Jacksonville University) are all expected to immediately start in singles and all showed great promise during the fall season.

Add that to returning starters and co-captains Joyce Ardies and Aleksandra Malovic, plus letterwinners Aleksandra Krsljanin and Vanja Radunovic, and the Huskies have their most depth yet under Hultquist.

The Huskies will be without three key contributors from last year's team, most notably graduated senior Tara Simpson, who finished tied for eighth in UW history with 73 singles wins and provided a great deal of leadership on and off the court. Simpson had her best season in her final go-round, winning 15 dual matches mostly at No. 3 singles. Allison Rainey also graduated, and freshman Kelsey Anonsen returned home to Vancouver to try her hand at basketball.

"Having Tara at number three, she was consistent and pulled out some big matches for us. You just knew she would always go fight one hundred percent. Losing Tara this year is hard but hopefully we can fill her shoes with some of the new girls that we have brought in. Kelsey added a lot to our doubles especially, and one of the disappointments for this year was losing Kelsey to basketball."

Still, with the quality of the three women added to the roster and the continued development of the returners, Washington figures to be stronger at nearly every point in the lineup, and well-balanced as a whole. With the possibility of two full years together, the stage is set for this group to make their own mark in Husky history.

The Lineup

With no seniors, youth will not only be served but hopefully return serve well also. Heading into the first dual matches in January, the singles lineup looks to be comprised of a combination of two freshmen, two sophomores, and two juniors. The past two seasons Hultquist has built the team back up piece by piece, and this season looks on paper to be the most complete group from one to six.

"We think we're really deep this year. Last year I thought we'd be competitive but this year we should be in every match at every spot," Hultquist says.

According to Hultquist, the preliminary lineup looks to be a combination of Venise Chan, Denise Dy, and Lina Xu in the top three spots, and Aleksandra Malovic, Joyce Ardies, and Samantha Smith slotting in the next three spots in an order to be determined, and, "We're quite happy with that," Hultquist says.

Chan will be looked to once again to take the oppos-



**Sophomore
Venise Chan**

VIEW

ing team's best shot at the No. 1 singles position. She began the 2008 season unranked but ended the season at No. 37 with a 21-10 singles record. Based on the final singles rankings, Chan had wins over nine ranked players, and was voted to the All-Pac-10 Second Team, just the fourth Husky to earn All-Pac-10 honors. Despite her success, her first round loss at NCAA's let her know where she still had room to improve. In the fall rankings, Chan earned a career-high rank of No. 27.

"Venise was so solid from the baseline last year," said Hultquist. "She went to NCAA's and was pretty confident but she ended up playing a girl that just got a lot of balls back, and maybe lobbed a little bit more than she was used to seeing. I think a little bell went off in Venise's head that said she needed a stronger net game. So in the fall we've been working on her closing out the points a little more at net, because she can bang with the best of them, but she needs to be able to close out the points with the best of them too. That is her next step."

Backing up Chan in the second singles spot figures to be newcomer Denise Dy. The freshman brings an impressive junior resume to Seattle, and has a wealth of experience playing in high-level matches throughout the world. Dy has played in all four of the Junior Grand Slams, and represented the Philippines in the Federation Cup. Dy and Chan were actually occasional doubles partners on the junior circuit, and if she can approximate Chan's freshman year success, Washington will be tough to handle.

"Denise has really brought the fun back into tennis. She's one of the most talented players I've ever seen," said Hultquist. "It's going to be a lot of fun just watching her because she's talented, she's creative, and she also enjoys the competition and loves the game and you can see it when she's playing on the court. She's so creative that sometimes it can hurt her because she's got so many options. So if Denise can just not get too flashy, she can do a lot. I'm really excited to see what she can do."

Xu is penciled in at the third spot to start the season. The sophomore was interested in Washington coming out of high school but the timing just didn't come together, and so she headed to Jacksonville, where she played No. 1 singles for the Jacksonville University Dolphins, and was named Atlantic Sun Conference Freshman of the Year and a First Team member. Xu moved from China to America by herself during high school to better pursue her tennis and schooling, and that independence shows on the court as well.

"Lina is all business out there. She's smart on the court and she figures out her opponents' weaknesses really fast," Hultquist says. "She's one of those players that Damon and I think we don't really have reason to go out on her court. If we leave her alone, she'll figure it out and she'll just get it done."

Malovic and Ardies are heading into their third seasons as Huskies, and despite their continued improvement, could find themselves playing lower in the lineup than seasons past. Malovic played every match at No. 2 singles last season and Ardies had a strong year in the fourth spot. Both could still wind up higher in the lineup, but having players of the experience and talent of Malovic and Ardies in the lower half could mean both players and the team as a whole would be poised for the best season of their careers.

"Aleks has got a lot to her game, and if she can just be mentally tough on the court, she could be playing in the top of our lineup as well. She's got a good all-around game, she just needs to believe in it," Hultquist says.

Ardies, a native of Sao Paulo, Brazil, has earned the respect of her coaches and teammates with her work ethic and determination on the court. Ardies posted a 12-9 dual record last season, and is one of UW's top doubles talents, playing No. 1 with Tara Simpson last year.

"Our fiery Brazilian," Hultquist calls Ardies. "She shows her passion on the court and anyone who watches her can see how passionate she is about the game and about winning. I just love watching Joyce because she's willing to try and win in a variety of ways. She always has a back-up plan. She has her goals set, and she reminds the team of what the goals are and how they will reach them. So she's a big team leader, and I think a lot of people look up to Joyce and look for her opinions and her lead."

Another new face Husky fans should quickly become familiar with is Samantha Smith. Smith had a terrific fall season, going 9-1 in singles matches and winning the 'B' flights at the St. Mary's Invite and the SDSU Fall Classic. Smith was one of the top-25 high school seniors in the nation last year, and already shows a great deal of grit on the court.

"Samantha is a workhorse out there," says Hultquist. "She gets every ball back and she's going to drive some opponents nuts, because she's very consistent and she uses the court really well. A lot of players in college like to just bang the ball. Samantha loves the pace and likes to create angles. If she needs to stay in a hundred ball rally, she will. She is a cool, calm operator."

Where it was occasionally a struggle just to get six healthy bodies to start a match during Hultquist's first two years, now there will be a surplus of talented players with the ability to start. Vanja Radunovic, Aleksandra Krsljanin and Lauren Summers have all started in singles during their career and provide key depth, while sophomore Ashley Anderson plans to redshirt. While settling on the right lineup and juggling playing time is always a challenge, it is certainly preferable for Hultquist to the alternative.

"I'd much rather have a challenge with too many choices than too few, but I do feel for the players that are still competing to get in the lineup," says Hultquist. "It's hard, everyone wants to play, but I'd much rather be here than going gosh I don't have anyone to fill in the five or six position right now."

The Schedule

The Huskies will have to keep their bags packed for much of the 2009 season, as they play only eight home dates while facing a minimum of fifteen matches on the road. For a young team, getting over any road jitters will be an important hurdle that, if cleared, will be a big advantage come tournament time.

"We're on the road a lot this year," Hultquist says. "We've had to return to a lot of schools to play them, so I told the girls it's going to be a tough season, but we've just got to make sure we get our rest and play hard."

After opening at home against Portland on January 17th, the women will hit the road for nearly a month, with two-match road swings through Utah, the Bay Area, and Minnesota. At the end of January, UW will be in Berkeley to partake in the expanded ITA National Team Indoor Championships, which this year include four-team regional qualifiers. The Huskies will be at the qualifying bracket hosted by California, and will play North Carolina State in the first round.

Washington's Pac-10 slate is spread out from the end of February until the last match of the year on April 18 against WSU. The Huskies will face an extremely challenging four-match road stretch at California, Stanford, Arizona, and Arizona State from Feb. 27-Mar. 7. They host Oregon on March 21, and the L.A. schools on April 3-4. Last season, the Pac-10 once again proved its dominance, with UCLA defeating California in the NCAA Final.

"Well it's the Pac-10 so it's always tough. You know what you're going to get, we're one of the strongest conference in the country," Hultquist says.

Another highlight on the schedule is a spring break trip to Hawai'i that will mix business and pleasure. The team will play three matches in four days against Cal Poly, Illinois, and Hawai'i before they can relax.

"The girls always love the trip but we have some very tough matches waiting for us," says Hultquist. "All three teams have added a lot of depth, so we're going to have to not have as much fun in Hawai'i and get down to business."

There can be no mistaking the difficulty of the schedule, playing in the premier conference with the majority of matches on the road. But the coaches and players know that to take the next step in the rankings and in the tournament, those are the matches they need to win.

"When you look at the teams ranked twenty-five to forty, we're right in the mix. The teams ranked right now just have one ranked player and maybe a ranked doubles team. I don't think we're that far off our goal. The girls have looked at the competition and said, 'Yeah, we know what we have to do.'"