



## **Grand Canyon University Men's Tennis 2009**

Grand Canyon University is bringing back men's tennis in 2009, following a 22-year layoff. The excitement, alone, offers a lot of reason to volley in the Valley.

For one, the Antelopes begin the program with a coach, Greg Prudhomme, who in one year, guided the women's team to the NCAA Division II National Championships with a team full of new players. Prudhomme also played professional tennis, and still has a mean forehand, so these baby fresh Antelopes won't have far to go to hone their skills against one of the Valley's best.

"I'm very excited to kick off the new men's team at GCU," Prudhomme said. "It's so refreshing to be at a school that is adding sports programs."

"New" is not necessarily a bad thing. After all, Grand Canyon women's team was essentially new last year, and the Antelopes advanced all the way to the NCAA National Tournament in Hawaii. In this case, new is an opportunity for the men's program. A chance to lay the groundwork for what almost seemingly appears to be a bright future for Grand Canyon University men's tennis.

"Being a first-year program, we will be a little young compared to most of our competition," Prudhomme said. "But our players will make up for it with their efforts and attitudes."

Grand Canyon sponsored a men's tennis team until 1987 when it was suspended. At the time, the school publicly stated it would "review the future with regard to adding the program back," according to current GCU Athletic Director Keith Baker.

This year, the Antelopes will build around freshman Brian Kirby, sophomores Eric Schroeder and Andrew Zappala and junior John Przybyl. A couple of starting singles spots are still up for grabs entering the preseason.

Kirby went 1-1 during a fall open tournament. Schroeder was 0-2. The pair went 0-1 in doubles play.

Prudhomme, who coached men's tennis at Glendale Community College before taking over the reigns of GCU women's team in 2007, has blended a team with tennis and other athletic history backgrounds.

Zappala ran cross country for Grand Canyon in the fall. Junior Luke Larm ran cross country and played lacrosse in 2008 for the Lopes. Soccer player Vlado Milenkovic, a junior from Brus, Serbia, and Chris Green, a freshman from Phoenix, will also compete on a team vying to succeed right away.

A couple of redshirts are expected to provide an immediate impact when they become eligible next season.

Grand Canyon's return to the hard courts for the first time in over two decades has this group of tennis players high "strung" in search of success.

"They are looking forward to being the pioneers, at least since the 80s, and know it make take some patience to build the program to its strong potential," Prudhomme said. "They are prepared for tough competition, and are ready to grow from their first season experiences on the GCU tennis team."