

# SPORTS NEWS



**Binghamton University • Office of Sports Information**

West Gym • P.O. Box 6000 • Binghamton, N.Y. 13902-6000

Phone: 607-777-6800 • Fax: 607-777-4597

Web: <http://athletics.binghamton.edu>

## Men's Tennis

For Immediate Release: April 29, 2003 • Contact: John Hartrick

### Bearcats capture America East Championship

Binghamton (17-9) capped a remarkable spring by winning the America East Championship and gaining the University's first-ever NCAA Division I tournament berth. Coached by Michael Starke, the Bearcats entered the six-team event as the top seed, and proceeded to topple fourth-seeded Hartford, 4-2, in the semifinals, and second-seeded Stony Brook, 4-3, in the title match.

"It's an incredible feeling," Starke said. "Sometimes all the hard work, planning, effort and team spirit comes to fruition. This team refused to let anything or anyone get in its way. They are a special group of guys — and they totally deserved to win."

### Team will advance to NCAA Regional

With the conference championship in hand, BU will advance to the NCAA Division I Regional, May 10-11. A total of 64 teams are selected and placed in 16 different regional across the country (four teams at each regional). The NCAA pairings will be announced Wednesday beginning at 4:45 p.m.

### Rao named Conference Player of the Year

Sophomore **Akshay Rao (New Delhi, India)** was named America East Player of the Year after going undefeated at the conference championship. In the semifinals, he scored a straight-set 7-5, 7-5 win over Hartford's two-year reigning Player of the Year, Pedja Zdravkovic. In the title match, Rao produced a commanding 6-0, 6-0 win over Stony Brook's top player. For the year, Rao is a stellar 32-4 overall, 23-3 in dual matches. He has won 11 consecutive singles matches. Also earning all-conference honors were senior **Brad Davidoff (Roslyn, N.Y.)**, freshman **Brian O'Connor (New Rochelle, N.Y./Iona Prep)** and junior **Steve Spencer (Plantation, Fla./Nova)** and Davidoff, the team's captain and No. 2 singles player, has won 64 matches in his career. O'Connor and Spencer each went 2-0 at the championship, providing two critical team points at fifth and sixth singles, respectively.

### Starke earns rare distinction with coaching honors

Starke was selected by his peers as America East Coach of the Year after guiding his team to a 17-9 record and first Division I conference title. He now owns the unique distinction of being named a conference coach of the year at all three NCAA levels. Back in 1990, he earned Division III honors in the State University of New York Athletic Conference (SUNYAC) in just his third year as head coach. That team won a school-record 18 matches and was ranked No. 24 in the nation. In 1999, Starke was honored by the New England Collegiate Conference after guiding his team to a runner-up finish and NCAA berth in the program's first year of Division II. And now after steering his second-year Division I program to the NCAA Championship, Starke has again been honored by his coaching peers.

### Up Next: NCAA Regional

The team will gather Wednesday afternoon at the Binghamton Tennis Center to watch the live unveiling of the NCAA Championship bracket live on ESPN News. The Bearcats will be placed in a four-team regional, likely in the Northeast.

"We may get roughed up, but we are not taking it lightly," Starke said of a likely first-round match with a prominent nationally-ranked program. "We hope to represent our conference and University with our best effort and show the utmost dignity and integrity."

### 2002-03 Schedule/Results (17-9)

#### SEPTEMBER

5 Thu.	ITHACA	W 7-0
7 Sat.-	@ Bloomsburg Duals	no scoring
8 Sun.	w/ Villanova, Lehigh	
17 Tue.	@ Siena	W 7-0
21 Sat.-	@ Cornell Invitational	no scoring
22 Sun.		

#### OCTOBER

6 Sun.	@ Williams	L 2-5
12 Sat.	BUFFALO	W 4-3
25 Fri.-	@ ITA East Regional	no scoring
29 Tue.	hosted by Penn	

#### JANUARY

25 Sat.	@ Army	L 1-6
26 Sun.	+COLGATE	L 2-5

#### FEBRUARY

1 Sat.	^Buffalo	W 5-2
	^Rochester	W 7-0
2 Sun.	^Niagara	W 5-2
	@ St. Bonaventure	L 3-4
8 Sat.	!Niagara	W 5-2
	!Bucknell	W 7-0
9 Sun.	!Marist	L 2-4
21 Fri.	@ Cornell	L 0-7

#### MARCH

9 Sun.	~ St. Louis	L 0-6
11 Tue.	@ Stetson	L 1-6
13 Thu.	~ Rhode Island	W 5-2
21 Fri.	%Manhattan	W 7-0
22 Sat.	@ St. John's	L 1-6
	@ Concordia	W 6-1

#### APRIL

5 Sat.	+HARTFORD	W 5-2
10 Thu.	BUCKNELL	W 5-2
11 Fri.	+STONY BROOK	W 4-3
13 Sun.	VERMONT	W 7-0
26 Sat.	\$Hartford	W 4-2
27 Sun.	\$Stony Brook	W 4-3

#### MAY

10 Sat.	NCAA Regional	TBA
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+ played at Binghamton Tennis Center  
~ played in Orlando, Fla.  
! played at Cornell  
^ played at St. Bonaventure  
% played at Columbia  
\$ America East Champ. in New Haven, Conn.